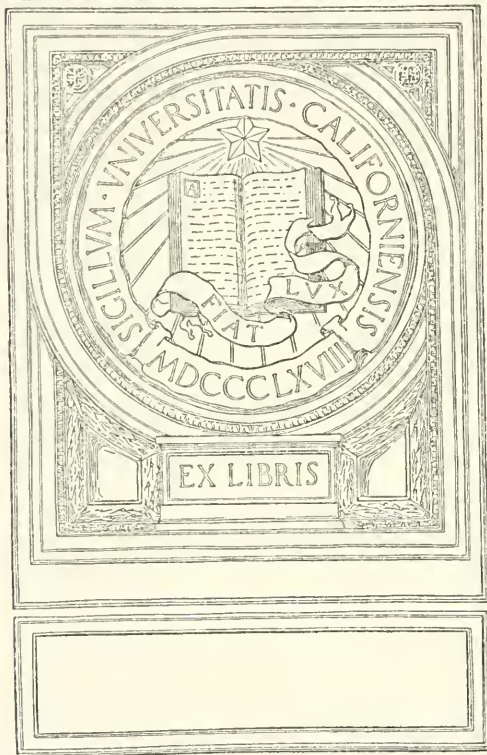


PAGES FROM THE  
JOURNAL OF A QUEENSLAND  
SQUATTER

*OSCAR DE SATGE*

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
AT LOS ANGELES





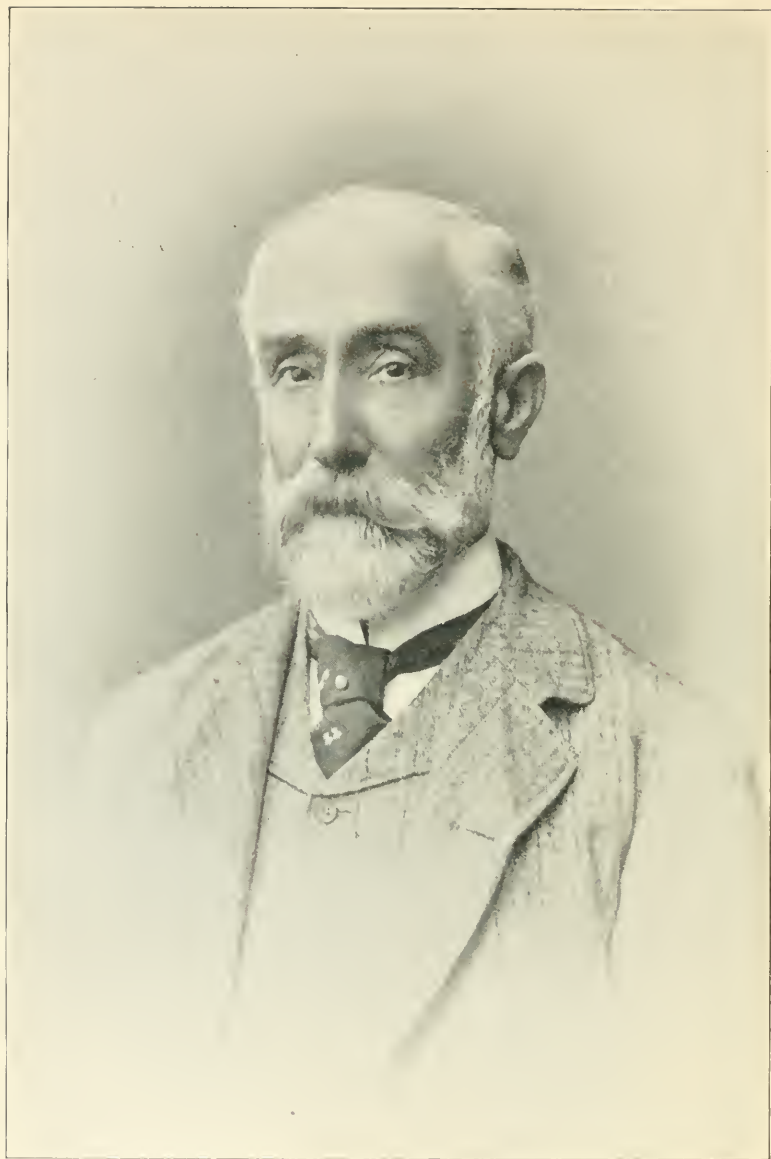




PAGES FROM THE JOURNAL OF A  
QUEENSLAND SQUATTER







yours faithfully,  
Oscar de Salge

Pages from the Journal  
OF A  
Queensland Squatter

BY  
OSCAR DE SATGÉ

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

LONDON  
HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED  
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1901

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DEDICATED

TO

SIR ROBERT GEORGE WYNDHAM HERBERT,

G.C.B., D.C.L., LL.D.,

FIRST PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND,

AND A USEFUL FRIEND TO THAT COLONY EVER SINCE.

*L. R. Fletcher - 7-2-43 - Lib. Lta*



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## INTRODUCTORY.

THESE reminiscences, which embrace over thirty years of Australian pastoral life and adventure, were written at the request of my friends. First comes a short glimpse of Victoria, then the scene is laid in New South Wales, then on to Queensland, where I spent many years in assisting to pioneer its central and western districts, of which my tale is somewhat of a record.

In 1853, when I landed as a youth in Victoria, I was able to get a knowledge of its goldfields in full swing. The Australian colonies did not carry then one-fifth of their present population. Railways were only commencing to be thought of; agriculture and its kindred industries were confined to the wants of the growing population; fencing for pastoral purposes was unknown; Victorian vineyards were still unplanted, and the exports that are now rehabilitating Victoria after a period of depression were in embryo. The colony was absorbed in its goldfields, which were then entirely of an alluvial

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character, such as Ballarat, Bendigo, Beechworth, Castlemaine, McIvor, canvas towns at the time, but long since changed to fine municipal cities, forming railway centres and enjoying to the full the benefits of the most civilized communities.

When I went north to New South Wales at the end of 1854, the freshness of first settlement was not so apparent. For Sydney, with its comparatively ancient houses and narrow and picturesque streets, relieved by occasional good public buildings, bore out its reputation as the mother of the Australias.

The first railway then only extended to the foot of the Blue Mountains, and the vast inland pastures to the west of them, though long explored and taken up by pastoralists as lessees from the Crown, were unfenced and only partly stocked and that chiefly with cattle, the great wool-growing industry of the present day being then a comparatively small affair. Artesian boring had not been essayed and other pastoralist developments were of a primitive character. Capital had not found its way into the country to the extent it has now, and the freeholds of such districts as Riverina and Liverpool Plains had not been secured as they afterwards were by their tenants; the shepherd had not given way to the boundary rider, and still folded his flock in bough yards at night to keep them safe from the predatory native dog.

Now everything has changed. Over a hundred millions of pounds is reckoned to have been invested

## INTRODUCTORY.

by the squatters in pastoral improvements in New South Wales, such as houses, wool-sheds, wire fencing, dams, reservoirs and Artesian wells, and an equal sum has been borrowed by the Government and judiciously spent in spreading over the country a network of well-constructed railways, one of which, at a distance of over 500 miles from Sydney, joins the water-way of the Darling, leaving no part of the Colony at any great distance from rail or water carriage.

As I write, the population of New South Wales has increased to one and a half million, of which nearly a third is gathered in and around Sydney, which is the great free trade port of the southern hemisphere, boasting a harbour where "its suburbs spread over countless promontories," and "houses cluster in endless inlets." The coast country is taken up with dairy farming, and many districts are developing agriculture where they first began with sheep; the settlement on the land having been the principal feature of all successive governments, the pastoral lessee having long ago played second fiddle.

The growth of New South Wales for the past fifty years has no doubt been remarkable, but that of Queensland ever since its separation in 1859 has been still more wonderful. When I landed in Brisbane in December, 1854, it was a small town of under 10,000 people; it will commence the twentieth century with over one hundred thousand

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people and with a well-dredged waterway from the sea capable of carrying ships of 5,000 tons to the river wharves of a city that could not, fifty years ago, have received a vessel of a fifth of that tonnage. Inland, over 2,000 miles of narrow gauge but serviceable railways have worked wonders in the development of the colony, and there has been more than an equal expenditure of capital on the land, chiefly for pastoral purposes. The gold industry—quartz mining—is of a permanent and growing character, whilst the frozen meat trade is a great feature, and in the southern part of Queensland, dairying and wheat growing are attaining creditable proportions.

It is in Queensland that most of the scenes of pastoral life that I have herein described are laid, and I can vouch for the accuracy of the incidents and adventures that fill in the useful years that I have been spared to spend in that splendid colony.



VIEW IN SYDNEY HARBOUR.



E. AND O. DE SATGE, 1853.





## CHAPTER I.

### VICTORIA.

TOWARDS the end of February, 1853, my brother and I, yielding to the *res angusta domi* of a considerable household, determined to try our fortunes in Australia, where the gold discoveries had attracted many who like ourselves had a spirit of adventure. We were healthy, strong and active, respectively nineteen and seventeen years old, and had been educated at Rugby School, a fact which we have ever recollected with pride in our wanderings and work.

It was the Rugby of Tait and Goulburn, still impregnated with the educational genius of the great Arnold. Amongst the masters we had such as Bradley, Benson, Cotton, Bonamy Price, Theodore Walrond and others who became celebrated men ; whilst the leading scholars numbered a Parry, Goschen, Bowen, Fisher and Sandford, distinguished names in the Church, Politics and Law. This fact made Rugby a famous school, and we could well exclaim on bidding it farewell "Floreat Rugbea."

We took our departure from England in one of Money Wigram's liners, the *Essex*, an East India-

man commanded by an irascible but excellent captain, John Bohun Martin, who some twelve years later went down in the *London*, an auxiliary steamer of the same line, on her first voyage, when she was swamped in the Bay of Biscay, having been overloaded with railway iron—Plimsoll not having in those days appeared on the scene. We had a tedious voyage of over ninety days, and can well recollect the salt pork régime of those sailing days, and contrast them with the luxury of travel afforded in the present day by the magnificent steamers that have succeeded the sailers of bygone times—a luxury that now enables you to get to Melbourne from London within the month.

Towards the end of May we found ourselves at Port Philip Heads, and were tugged up the narrow water-way some forty miles, to anchor at the mouth of the Yarra, close to Sandridge, amongst a great fleet of ships of all nations—crack clippers many of them—*The Lightning*, *Marco Polo*, *Red Jacket*, *Blue Jacket* and others, that followed the breezes far south, and circle-sailed their 400 miles a day on some occasions. As a suburb of the Melbourne of that day, “Canvas town” still existed. This gave a Bohemian air to the whole place, which the glitter of its American bars and the rowdyism of its lucky diggers tended still further to exaggerate. Money was quickly made and quickly spent in those days.

My brother soon determined to push further

north for the new colony of Moreton Bay, where he had letters to some of the squatters resident there, while I was tempted to try the Public Service with a letter of introduction to Mr. Latrobe, who was then the Governor of Victoria. After waiting patiently for a few weeks, during which I explored the city and its suburbs, on some of the swamps of which I had some good duck shooting, I obtained a clerkship in the office of Captain Wright, the Chief Commissioner of Gold Fields. The salary was two hundred a year, with a gratuity of one hundred a year for house rent, which enabled me to boast that I earned three hundred a year when I was seventeen years old; though no doubt it was chiefly to the scarcity of educated young men that I owed my good fortune; most of them no doubt were trying their luck at Bendigo, Castlemaine, Ballarat or some other mining centre of that Victorian period, and looked at that time with contempt at quill-driving when they could handle a pick, though the time came, I had cause to know later on, when they would gladly have exchanged the pick for the pen.

Early the following year I was ordered from the Melbourne office to reinforce the Gold Commissioner's Office at Bendigo, to which we had a toilsome journey of 100 miles over a boggy road which included the celebrated Black Forest. It was our first experience of camping out, and we were pretty merry over it; one could not help

being struck with the number and variety of teams that crowded that road, and the cruelties often practised on the draught horses, the idea being that the best way to make a jibbing horse shift his load was to light a fire under him until he did so. Years after I was told, when the iron horse traversed the Black Forest, that two skeletons had been found tied to trees about half a mile from the road, which must have meant the "sticking up" of a couple of returning diggers. The Black Forest had a very bad name, and as we had to walk most of the way through it owing to the nature of the roads, we long recollected its dismal track and jaded horses. However, we arrived on the third day at the outskirts of Bendigo, of which we had heard so much, and soon took in the country, which had the appearance of gigantic ant-hills, the earth being turned up in all directions, leaving the bare space of the roadway free from diggers' holes. We were highly excited, I recollect, and like true new chums began to look for specks of the shining metal on either side of the road.

It was some time before the feverish excitement of being on a gold field subsided, but we were soon recalled by our duties at the Commissioner's Camp, which we found well situated on a commanding ridge from which we could see miles of the upturned landscape, with tents and an occasional barked hut. The "Camp" consisted of wooden barracks built for a battalion of the 40th regiment (we had

Imperial troops then in Australia), and the roomy, floored tents of the Resident Commissioner and his Assistant Commissioners and the Staff of the Gold Office. That Gold Office, a strong wooden building, had been, and was still, the resting place—previous to its being sent away by escort once a week to Melbourne—of many a ton of alluvial gold, and many a celebrated nugget, some of which I have handled weighing over 16 lbs. of pure gold without quartz. Wilkinson, or “Blowhard,” as we used to call him, was the Commissioner in charge of the Gold Office. Heywood was his chief clerk, a smart, Yankified chap, whose assistant, in press of work, I often became. How little we thought of the precious metal when we tossed the bags for escort to each other like practising catches with a cricket ball.

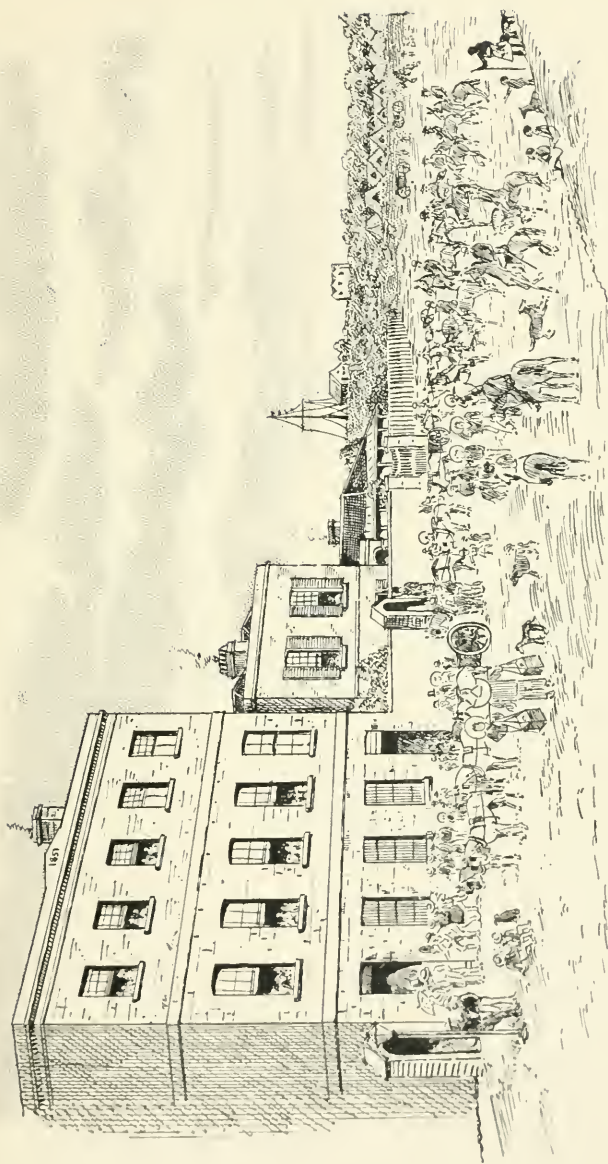
This escort service was generally in charge of a subaltern of the 40th regiment, accompanied by the Victorian Mounted Police. It entailed hard work and much responsibility, the roads being bad, and distances between the resting places very long. Soon after we left Bendigo, I recollect the McIvor Escort being stuck up by bushrangers, who had carefully planned the coup by throwing up an ambush at the turn of the road, from which they fired, and shot a good few of both horses and escort. These bushrangers were eventually all captured and hanged in Melbourne, to the number of five.

The Bendigo Gold Field, in 1854, was under the

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charge of the Resident (or Chief) Commissioner, with a staff of five or six Assistant Commissioners residing at various out-stations on a field that extended to over fifty square miles of country. This Resident Commissioner at the time, and for some years after, was John Anderson Panton, than whom the Queen never had a more zealous, genial or capable Colonial servant. Well do I recollect the encouragement he gave to all who served under him, whether Commissioner, Clerk or Orderly, and after a lapse of nearly fifty years, I can well recall his tall, well-knit figure, as, mounted on his fine grey horse Almack, he used to start off with his staff, to visit his large district. Time, I am glad to say, has dealt well with him as I write, and he still serves his Queen as the Police Magistrate of the great city of Melbourne. Of the Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners, a good many had been in the service, and were mostly scions of good family, such as F. C. Standish, Mackenzie, Dowling and Bernal, the latter a brother of Bernal Osborne. The officers of the Victorian Mounted Police were also a good class, and the force itself a fine soldierly one, well drilled and mounted, and I don't know how the Victorian Gold Fields in those days would have been kept in order without them. The Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors ranked with the Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners of Gold Fields, and these all worked well together for the protection of life and property at a time when California was sending over to Australia the scum of





THE TREASURY, MELBOURNE—ARRIVAL OF GOLD ESCORT, 1852.



its goldfields, which it was difficult to restrain and keep in order.

As far as Bendigo went, however, Lachlan McLachlan, the famous Police Magistrate, helped to do this in a wonderful manner—"Bendigo Mac," as he was called, was a terror to evil doers, and unerring in his discrimination of culprits. At this time, the monthly license fee of 30s. a month pressed heavily on those who were not in luck; it was a tax difficult to collect, the process being, in fact, a good deal like a rat hunt, the non-holders of licenses bolting down the diggers' holes on the approach of the Police Escort. It was my duty often to act as Licensing Clerk and to be responsible for large sums of money collected in the Licensing Booth, an unpleasant job with crowds pressing to be served on certain days. These Licensees comprised "all sorts and conditions of men," Indians, Chinese, and Maoris being conspicuous in the crowd that pressed round the licensing booth.

This arid part of Victoria, with its quartz gullies and iron bark ridges, was terribly hot in the summer months, and it was at Bendigo that I first realised the extent of Australian heat, especially when, as was often the case, bush fires raged in the neighbourhood. We managed as well as we could in our carpet-lined tents, and on the whole made the best of circumstances; still I was not sorry, after nine months of Bendigo, to be transferred to the office of

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the Clerk of Parliaments in Melbourne, my journey back to town being by Cobb's coach, an improvement to the cart I had travelled up through the Black Forest with.

When I got back to Melbourne, I was glad to look up my friend, Mrs. Greene of Woodlands, one of those charming Victorian country houses, about fifteen miles from Melbourne, where without being quite in the bush, you were well out of the glare and bustle of town; Melbourne not having yet started its palatial suburbs. Mrs. Greene was kindness itself, and used to rouse me in time to walk in to the office, some fifteen miles of a summer's day before nine o'clock, after spending an occasional Sunday in the shade of that Deep Creek Garden. Mrs. Greene was the mother of two distinguished colonists, Rawdon Greene, whose life was sacrificed to squatting adventure in the far north, and Molesworth Greene, who dwells on his estate near Melbourne, and there continues the hospitable family traditions, surrounded by a charming family, and following ever the bent of his literary tastes. I liked my new duties in Melbourne, and have pleasant recollections of my superiors in office; one of them, my friend Comyns, a fearless and splendid rider, used to give me an occasional mount.

One of the pleasantest recollections of that time were the Sunday evening meetings I was privileged to attend, at the house of the Dean of Melbourne, Dr. Macartney, who died only recently considerably

over ninety years old. A number of his young men friends used to meet and read the Bible, each a verse in turn with remarks, which the Dean in his turn elucidated. His daughter dispensed coffee, and we used to disband with a glow of satisfaction, mental and physical, after these meetings. Arthur Macartney, the Dean's eldest son, was destined to see a good deal of Queensland thereafter, of which colony he became a hard-working pioneer and determined explorer. I also remember, at those Sunday meetings, Mr. Stawell, who became Attorney-General, and later on Chief Justice of Victoria, and who as Sir William Stawell, left an honourable name to his numerous family. Lady Stawell was a daughter of Mrs. Greene. Sir William Stawell was a thoroughly good man.

The characteristics of Victoria in the early days I speak of she still retains ; her new generation, bred up in the last fifty years, are hardy, sanguine and speculative. The Victorian differs from the New South Welshman in that he is inclined to spend his money as fast as he makes it. Nature has been bountiful to Victoria in soil and climate, although she is somewhat restricted in her territory, and would no doubt be the better of the dearly-prized Riverina which encircles her with a firm grasp (but which her mother, New South Wales, does not intend to relax). All the Victorian soil is good, and the climate and rainfall more certain and equable than that of either New South Wales,

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Queensland, or South Australia. The fortunate Riverina man does not go to Sydney (his colony) to spend his money; he prefers living at Toorak, near Melbourne, in some of those exquisite suburban houses where an electric tram-car keeps him in touch with the Melbourne Club, and his complexion and digestion are not likely to suffer by extremities of climate, and where society opens its arms with the utmost cordiality to travellers from every clime. Agriculturally, Victoria prospers by leaps and bounds; her dairying possibilities are enormous, and she may shortly become a second Denmark. She is exporting to England in millions the rabbits which once threatened to devastate her. She has great possibilities in eggs and poultry, for which England sends yearly many millions to France. Her wines and her brandies are famous. In wool of extraordinary fineness she cannot be approached (*vide* Ercildoune and Mount Bute), and if her alluvial goldfields are nearly worked out, she is only now developing her quartz mining reefs, with facilities of carriage and fuel and water that enable her to receive excellent results from low grade ores that would not, perhaps, pay in any other colony.

I will say good-bye to Victoria for a time; I shall revisit her later on.

## CHAPTER II.

### MORETON BAY VIA SYDNEY.

TOWARDS the end of 1854 my brother wrote me from Moreton Bay that he was getting on very well, and had already been given charge of a cattle and sheep station on the borders of New England beyond the Darling Downs. He described the pleasant homestead he lived in, the hard-riding life amongst the cattle at Mangoola, and his steadier work with sheep at Glenlyon, and advised me to give up Government Service and to come and learn squatting. I did not take long to make up my mind, and quickly resolved to give up office life, of which I had had eighteen months, and yield to the fascination of open air and freedom, and so join him. I was the more induced to do so, that by resigning my billet at that time, I saved the "congé" of a worthy man, Townsend by name, who had a family to support. He was my junior in the office, and the retrenchments of a new quarter-deck Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, had marked him out for dismissal.

I received full directions for my journey to Brisbane, so in December, 1854, I left Melbourne for Sydney. The boats plying between Melbourne



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and Sydney in those days were, I need not say, very small as compared to those doing that service later on, and my means of transport on that occasion was an old Yankee craft, the *Governor General*, carrying dangerous top hamper in the shape of an upper deck that had a curious list as she rolled in the trough of a considerable sea. I was, I remember, uncommonly glad to get safely out of her after entering for the first time those Sydney Heads, which, for thirty years after, I was destined to steam in and out of under every condition of weather and fortune, and in all kinds of vessels ; I have gone out of Sydney Heads when the sea was raging outside, and one had to steady one's nerves and footing as the ship took its first plunge into what seemed a dangerous abyss.

It must ever be difficult to do full justice to Port Jackson, Sydney's great harbour, but it is better for me to attempt it at this point of my narrative, and in doing so I cannot do better than quote a remarkably accurate account of it I came across in the *London Globe*, from its Sydney correspondent, who writes with full mastery of the subject. He says :

“It is a sight well worth a sea voyage of several thousand miles to behold the harbour, with its magnificent lake-like expanse of water, stretching away eight or ten miles inland, forming one of the natural beauties of the world. As the eye wanders along the vista, a succession of picturesque and beautiful landscapes come under review. The irre-



## MORETON BAY.

gularity of the shores, the luxuriant verdure with which the hills are clothed ; the innumerable villa residences nestling cosily on the slopes of the cliffs—which form the general outline of the bays—surrounded with exquisitely laid-out gardens filled with plants and fruits from almost every clime, form a panorama of singular beauty. The waters of the port are of a depth sufficient for the largest ship afloat to manœuvre in ; vessels drawing 27 ft. can enter the Heads at dead low water with perfect safety ; while as regards its capacity, it is not surpassed by any other haven. It is surrounded by a hundred or more bays, inlets, and creeks, the scenery around each being of a most charming character. Many of these bays form, of themselves, capacious harbours, some of them extending inland for miles. The main waters are dotted over with glittering islets, which add to the exquisite grandeur of this noble estuary, while they form no impediment to navigation.

“The entrance to the harbour is about a mile in width. On either side the rocks rise up to a great height, forming a natural gateway. So completely is the harbour shut in, that until an entrance is fairly effected, its capacity and safety cannot even be conjectured. The North Head rises with singular abruptness to a height of about 300 ft. The outer South Head, immediately under the Macquarie Lighthouse, rises to an elevation of upwards of 350 ft. ; but the rocks dip towards the north, until, at the inner

entrance to the bay, where a fixed coloured light stands, the elevation is not more than 80 or 90 ft. Immediately opposite the entrance stands a bold, rocky promontory, Middle Head, which, when viewed from a distance at sea, gives to the harbour an appearance of comparatively small dimensions, a mere indentation of the coast, which deceived even the experienced eye of Captain Cook. At the further end of the harbour are the entrances to the Paramatta and Lane Cove rivers, the former being that on which the leading Australian rowing and sculling contests take place. Both streams pass through scenery of the loveliest description, the Lane Cove river being famous for its profusion of ferns and beautiful native flowers. On one side of Middle Head is an inlet, extending a winding course of several miles, between lofty precipitous slopes covered with primeval forest, and from the ridges of which may be seen the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean, stretching away until they appear to blend with the sunlit sky on the distant horizon."

This excellent description conveys recent impressions, and is the more valuable on that account, as nearly fifty years ago, the villas that dotted the various points were not so numerous nor the gardens so ornate as they are now, though the great natural beauties were the same.

I stopped a few days in Sydney intensely interested at everything I saw, marking the difference of its more settled population and institutions from those



SYDNEY HARBOUR FROM GOVERNMENT HOUSE.



## MORETON BAY.

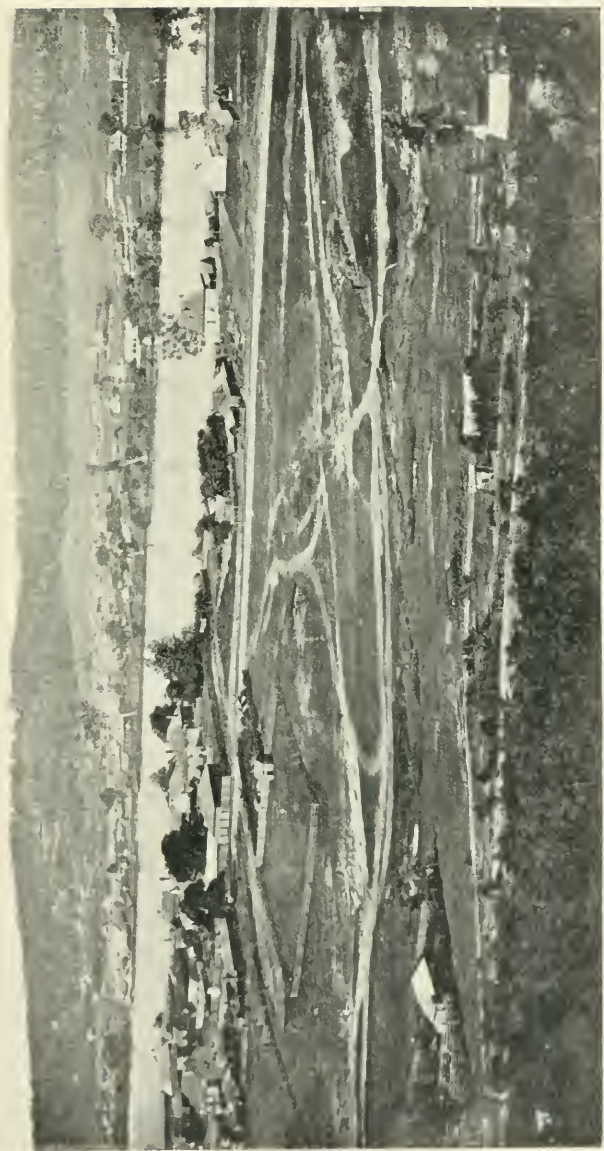
of Melbourne, but I had not then the time or the experience which I had in later years to form conclusions of value. I had picked up a friend on board who directed me to an hotel on Church Hill and took me about, and I don't know what I should have done without him. It was "blazing" hot, locusts sang in the trees, and the waves of the harbour glittered in the radiant atmosphere of mid-summer in the southern hemisphere. I remember visiting the theatre, where I saw Sir Charles Fitzroy, then Governor of the Colony, a stout, jolly-looking man, who had lost his wife (a daughter of the Duke of Richmond) a few years previously, by a carriage accident, in coming out of the gate of the old Government Residence at Paramatta, when the four-in-hand driven by Sir Charles, who was a skilful whip, swung round so sharply at the turn of the lodge gate, that both Lady Mary and the aide-de-camp, Mr. Chester Master, were thrown out and killed. It happened curiously that my destination in Moreton Bay was the station property which, managed by my brother, was owned by Mr. Robert Chester Master, a brother of the aide-de camp who had met his death by that accident.

I was only two or three days in Sydney before I shipped myself on for Moreton Bay and the then nascent town of Brisbane in the new screw steamer *Boomerang*, so called from the fact that her screw-propeller was boomerang shaped, an experiment, I believe, that did not eventually succeed. In after

times I had many a steam up and down the northern coast in the old *Boomerang*. She was commanded by Captain O'Reilly, who was already a favourite on that line ; an excellent fellow, who, after being senior captain of the A. S. N. Company, became its Brisbane agent, and died there from the loss of his eye, caused by a spark from a passenger's pipe. I wonder such accidents were not more frequent in those days of reckless smoking on board, anywhere and everywhere.

On board the *Boomerang*, I came across by good luck some near neighbours of my brother ; they had been to Sydney on a short holiday, and told me my brother was considered a very smart man and good rider, and in fact could, they believed, ride a buck-jumper, a statement I found made by Bushmen always with due gravity. Besides these neighbours, I made the acquaintance on board of a former head of the Government of New South Wales, Sir Stuart Donaldson, a polished and accomplished man, who was taking up his ward, young Alick Riley, to take possession of his property, Clifton, which oddly enough adjoined Mangoola, the station I was going to, a rough range only dividing them. Sir Stuart made himself most agreeable and was full of anecdote and humour. As for Alick Riley, he was a splendid specimen of the highly educated new generation of New South Wales, and one could not help being fascinated by his companionship. When we got up to our respective stations, we often met for a time,





BRISBANE, 1862.





## MORETON BAY.

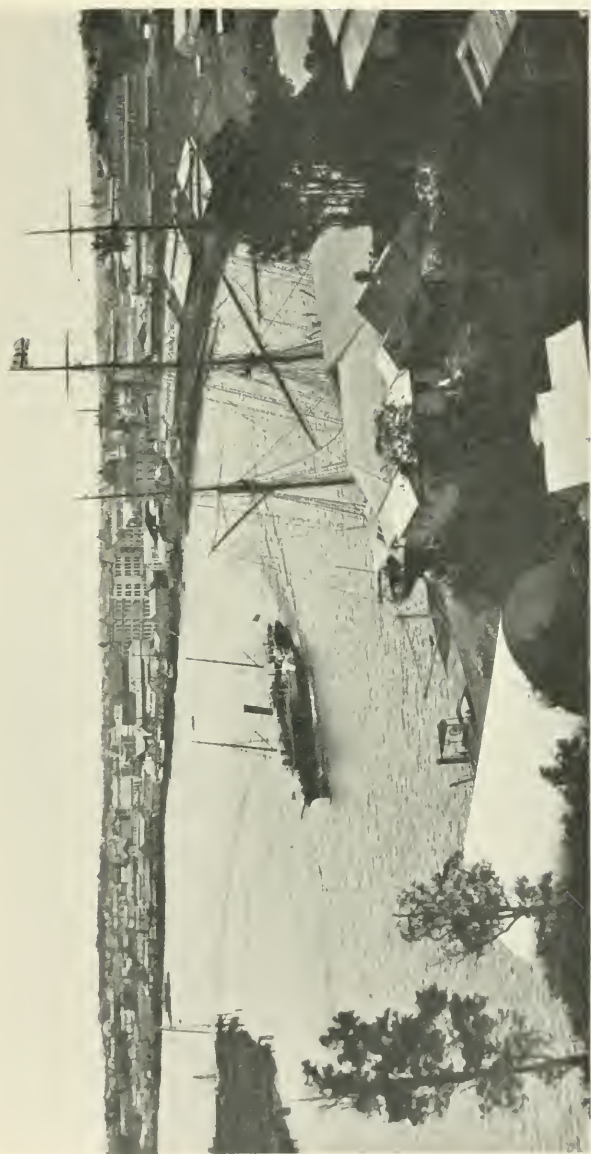
and had many a pleasant camp together, whenever business or pleasure tempted us to exchange calls. Like all native-born colonists, Riley was very fond of horses and had a notable jumper, "Bing-eye," who thought nothing of clearing all the paddock fences at Clifton and Tenterfield. I was sorry to learn in after years that Riley had died in his prime. His father had imported to their place, Raby, a noted horse called "Skeleton," from whom some of the best blood in New South Wales claimed descent. I was sorry when our pleasant trip to Brisbane came to an end ; the weather had been magnificent, the sea like glass, and the coast line interesting to me who saw it for the first time. The *Boomerang* had to wait a bit at the pilot station off Moreton Island for high water to cross the bar, and then make her way slowly and carefully through the buoyed channel of Moreton Bay on to the mouth of the Brisbane river, which is about thirty miles from Brisbane.

It is not easy, even with the help of notes taken at the time, to carry one's memory back over forty years and describe accurately what Brisbane was in 1854, but it had small claim then to become the city it is now. The city had been well laid out, but its improvements were then limited to odd wooden buildings marking here and there the delineation of the wide streets, with occasionally a brick building, and first amongst these the huge and ugly old convict barracks which housed the various Govern-

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ment offices, besides doing duty for Immigration barracks, and, later on, for the first Legislative Chambers. For in 1854 there was no Queensland as a Colony, but only Moreton Bay as a province of New South Wales, with a Government Resident (Captain Wickham, R.N.) directing the simple and inexpensive government of this northern province. The navigation of the Brisbane River from its mouth had not been dredged as it is now, and only small vessels could come up with the tide and anchor at the wharves. There was no bridge across the river, only punts and ferries, and the roads inland over the little Liverpool Range and the main range on to the Darling Downs were in wet seasons veritable sloughs of despond. There was a detachment of the 12th Regiment, which marked a measure of Imperial protection, and, in fact, Moreton Bay was slumbering, waiting to spring into the life she received as the separate Colony of Queensland in 1859.

However, the site of the city cannot be challenged; it nestles on many hills commanding the windings of a beautiful river, a good deal wider than the Thames at London Bridge. Modern Brisbane clusters on the north side of the river, and if it is by no means as level as Melbourne or Adelaide, it is all the more picturesque. The river frontages, and these are extensive owing to the windings of the river, are chiefly taken up by wharves, excepting always the central bend of the



BRISBANE FROM BOWEN TERRACE.



river, on the banks of which the beautiful Botanical Gardens are laid out, and near which the Government House and Legislative Chambers are built. The Government House lies somewhat low, favouring the mosquitoes in summer, so there was, not many years ago, a talk of building a new one on some of the heights dominating the town, where most of the merchants have built themselves houses. Indeed, Brisbane is no exception to the rule of other colonial capitals, viz., to live as much as possible out of town after you have done your business in it.

Notwithstanding errors of judgment, and, in colonial parlance, much log rolling, the last forty years have done more for Brisbane than, perhaps, any other Australian capital. The river has been dredged to accommodate the liners of most of the great steam companies trading to Australia, including the British India S. N. Co., which holds the mail contract, and railways have taken the place of the infamous roads which the earlier settlers traversed to get to the great western plains that form the pastoral backbone of Queensland. The construction of the southern line of railway and that of the South Western line to Charleville have sent Brisbane ahead immensely, and opened the inland traffic to the agricultural areas of the Darling Downs, which have enabled meat and other factories around Brisbane to make sure of a supply of material. Everything that legislation could do has

been done for the chief town of the Colony, which now includes in city and suburbs, a population equal to that of over one-fifth of the whole of the Colony. Of course, Brisbane is not a central capital, and it can never be so, but it is in the centre of that southern and more thickly populated portion of the Colony that is least tropical in its attributes, and, therefore, the most attractive for permanent residence. The northern portion of Queensland, though teeming with mineral and other wealth, be it well understood, lacks the more southern inducements to live in it all the year round, though parts of it have the attraction of considerable altitude and its accompanying temperature.

My arrival in Brisbane was marked with the pleasant hospitality of the owner of the station I was going to learn my colonial experience upon, Francis Robert Chester Master, who had been a subaltern in the New Zealand war of 1845, and had come to settle in Brisbane with his charming wife, a daughter of Hannibal Macarthur, one of the leading families of New South Wales. Bob Master and his wife did all they could to cheer me on my way, and though it was very hot, I was charmed with my first glimpse of Moreton Bay, with its semi-tropical life and glowing vegetation, its pineapples and bananas, its sparkling atmosphere and stimulating heat, with cool nights and the skies of Italy; whilst it was evident from the people I met that the country was being colonized by a first-rate set of men, a





PINE APPLE PLANTATION, BRISBANE.






*MORETON BAY.*

fact, indeed, to which the Queensland of to-day owes much of its attraction.

As to climate, of course it was midsummer, but the heat was not enervating but stimulating, the air perfectly translucent; and I suppose the winter months of Queensland give you the choicest climate in the world, a climate that will ever attract the invalid in search of a temperature and air where the lungs take a holiday and do a minimum of work, which is the case especially on the plateau of the Darling Downs.



## CHAPTER III.

### FIRST TASTE OF BUSH LIFE.

AFTER spending a week with my kind hosts, the Chester Masters, they found me, as an escort to Warwick (where my brother was to meet me), the Canning Downs sheep overseer, an excellent old fellow, who judiciously opened my eyes as to the life that was before me. Our road lay *via* Limestone (now called Ipswich), some five and twenty miles from Brisbane, where we stopped at a good country inn, meeting several Darling Downs men on their way to town. Everything was new, and therefore interesting. I recollect being first struck as we rode along with the number of ant hills that lined the road like so many attenuated sentry boxes. Limestone was at the head of the navigation of the Brisbane River, and even then was the second town in Moreton Bay, and a considerable township. Our journey from there to Warwick lay through country that was well timbered, but the grass was all very dry, as there had been no rain for some time, and I was told it was the hottest time they had known

for several years. When we approached the Main Range, twenty miles the Limestone side of Warwick, it became cooler, and we enjoyed the change to the gigantic forest that shaded the ascent of the far-famed Cunningham's Gap. That useful timber, the stringy bark and black butt trees, towered above us to the height of two to three hundred feet, and created dense shadows, whilst the undergrowth contained a great variety of other evergreen eucalypti. I heard for the first time the cooing of the wonga wonga, and my eyes followed the flight of various gaudy-coloured parrots and parroquets, whilst the harsh shriek of the cockatoo resounded through the stillness of the primeval forest. It gave me a feeling of delightful awe, and I did not forget for a long time this first introduction to the great Liverpool Range, which, under one denomination or another, divides the eastern from the western waters in no less than three of the Australian colonies—Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria.

Ascending the range we met a lot of bullock teams, some going up with rations, others coming down with wool, but all vigorously combating the difficulties of very rough roads. The Australian bullock team does not yield to moral persuasion, so strong language and the resonant crack of the bullock whip play a great part in the stock-in-trade of a successful carrier, regarding whom I was there and then considerably enlightened. Huge saplings were in almost every case attached to the

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descending loads to act as a drag. Teams in Queensland generally travelled in company, so that they could afford each other assistance, whether in the crossing of creeks or the double banking through boggy country, or the ascent of steep pinches. However the iron horse has long since then been doing the heaviest work of the up-country traffic, and carriage has long ceased to be the bugbear it was in the old pioneering days.

My mate and I were glad to lead our horses up the steep ascent of Cunningham's Gap, then following the windings of a rough and deeply-indented road, with high spurs on either side, some of these clothed with the many evergreens of the dense scrubs that formed in those days the hunting grounds of the native blacks. The range once ascended we stood on the broad plateau of the Darling Downs, some fifteen hundred to two thousand feet above the sea level, and breathed a cooler atmosphere, whilst we looked upon a wider prospect. From this our journey to Warwick lay mostly through open black soil downs, picturesquely dotted with clumps of timber; these plains then formed portions of Maryvale, Canning Downs and other stations, but are now mostly cut up into prosperous farms, growing as heavy crops of wheat, maize, barley, and oats as any other good land in wide Australia.

The third day from Brisbane thus saw our arrival at Warwick, now the chief town of South-Eastern

*FIRST TASTE OF BUSH LIFE.*

Darling Downs. In those days it boasted of a good general store or two, and a few comfortable public houses. I bade a cordial farewell to my first mate, and put up at Dr. Labat's hospitable house, where I had been told to await my brother. The doctor was clever, eccentric, and abrupt, and like all Australian country doctors he was a friend all round, and could give you the news of the district commercially as well as socially. When I arrived he had been called away to a fatal case of snake bite at Ellangowan, and when I met him he put me on my guard regarding snakes, so I soon adopted the excellent habit of walking through the bush with my head down instead of up. My stay at Dr. Labat's was marked in my memory by meeting there William Beit, on his way from Acacia Creek to manage Westbrook for J. D. McLean. Beit gave me a lot of shrewd as well as good-natured advice, and I never felt astonished at the success that attended his career in after days.

In due course, my brother arrived, accompanied by a black boy, bringing spare horses to carry self and swag. It was delightful thus to meet, after eighteen months' separation, during which we had respectively gleaned much information regarding the resources of this new country of our adoption. We yarned far into the night and found that we had both become smokers. As the days were extremely hot, my brother arranged that we should make our first start for Mangoola in the evening, ride some

twenty miles by moonlight and camp out, leaving some sixty-five miles of our journey for the following day. This was my first camp with the saddle as my pillow and the starry sky as a roof, about the best experience in that climate, if you are young, strong and fresh, as we then were. I heard the native dog or dingo howl for the first time, an unearthly cry, and one of them I found in the morning had tugged at and gnawed the bridle I had hung on a sapling a few yards off. I was then also first introduced to the hobbling and short hobbling of horses and the application of a good bell that can be heard for over a mile off to the greatest rambler of your mob, for there is no more important matter to the traveller than his being able to get his horses early, so as to make a good start. Some horses are inveterate rogues, and seem to shy off from the work that awaits them the next morning; these it is best to keep for head station work, and not take them on a journey. The following day we did the sixty-five miles all right, rather a long ride for a new chum on a hot day, and I was glad enough to turn into a good bed at Mangoola and dream of the new life that lay before me.

The country we traversed between Warwick and Mangoola was lightly timbered and sound, but very different to the country we had left on the Darling Downs; it was chiefly box and iron bark ridges, with pebbly quartz scattered over them; the country grew fine merino wool then, and presumably does so still,

but the stock must be all the better for a good deal of rock salt. The district was purely grazing land, and would never be selected for agriculture. We called at Pikedale on the road, and I there renewed my acquaintance with the neighbours I had met on the *Boomerang*, who had a most comfortable homestead and made the best of life in the Bush.

Mangoola, though small, was certainly an ideal cattle run ; it was encircled by the high mountains of the dividing range between Moreton Bay and New England, and two streams ran through it fringed with broad river flats ; these creeks took their source at the head of the run. The bulk of the cattle, which embraced the quietest portion of the herd, ran on the lower part of the station, whilst the wilder ones kept to the upper part of the creeks, under the range, from which at branding time it was exceedingly difficult to dislodge them.

Below the horse paddock that surrounded the homestead three creeks met, the Mole, Pike's Creek and the Sovereign, after which junction the river became the Severn, the main head, in fact, of the Macintyre River. These creeks abounded with cod fish and perch. Ducks and other wildfowl were plentiful, and the bigger water-holes were the very home of the duck-billed platypus, specimens of which I could secure at any time. It was a pleasant change to be able, often, to steal down to the water-hole at the corner of the horse paddock, and



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secure a brace of fat black duck, than which there is not a better game bird in Australia. They seemed to rise with difficulty, so plump were they, and one could not miss them, when they paused to steady themselves in the air for more rapid flight. We had also quail on the river flats, but I had to look out for snakes, for on my first venture I nearly trod on one; he was a black snake too, with a pink belly, the bite of which is held to be as fatal as any. We had got to Mangoola just in time for Christmas, which was spent pleasantly together; we had grapes in the garden and quantities of both rock and water melon. The station hands were few, and consisted of a Chinaman cook, acting also as general servant, a stockman and his wife, and a couple of black boys, natives of Mangoola, who could ride anything and, in bush parlance, could track a mosquito.

Cattle stations, of course, were more cheaply managed, and required far less expenditure, than sheep stations; but, on the other hand, cattle don't grow wool, and wool has been found the only factor to keep down the interest of money, which, like the growth of wool, never slumbers. Therefore it is good to start with the maxim of borrowing very inconsiderably, if you must borrow at all, on a cattle station.

I began 1855 at Mangoola, with the usual routine work of a cattle station, which is mustering and branding the calves, starting fats to market,



breaking in horses, &c. ; not having to bother what money was being made out of the cattle or the horses. For, at the first start, it is the irresponsibility of the game that fascinates the new chum, and it is only later on, and when you become the manager or the owner that you begin to reason as to the profit for your labour, and the returns from the property you have in hand. Such a property as Mangoola was bound to give a good return for its capital value, for that could not be large, whilst droughts did not affect it, as water, so important on a cattle run, was very plentiful and the markets of both Brisbane and Maitland were good and within easy driving reach. I have often thought, in after years, what a pleasant haven of rest that station would be to an unambitious settler, surrounded, as it could be, with cultivated areas of lucerne, so well fitted for the breeding of stud stock, and amidst all the comforts of such a homestead and garden as could be reared there. I have often wondered who has got it now.

Well, it may interest the youthful reader of these pages to know that I progressed fast in the art of riding, though I never got to riding a buck-jumper with absolute confidence, a feat which the black boys, stockman, and also my brother, were able to accomplish when occasion required. I got a lot of spills, one of them rather a bad one, in trying to crack the stockwhip; the whip got round my horse's tail, and he "went to market," giving me a cropper from which I lay for some time stunned.

My brother soon changed saddles and took it out of him.

We were at work, I will say that, from daylight to dark, no time to read or write letters, and with few hands there was always a job on hand for even a new chum, if it was only riding thirty miles to Tenterfield for our post. The work I got to like best, however, was going after wild horses at the head of the run amongst the ranges. This entailed generally a breathless ride at full gallop of ten or fifteen miles, and if we "found" it was by no means certain we should yard the mob. Of course our black boys played a great part in this work. Our mode of procedure was to camp somewhere near the spot where the horses were supposed to run, the black boys tracking them up, and knowing pretty certainly by the tracks when they had been there. Our horses were then either close hobbled or tethered for the night so as to tackle the wild mob in the morning as early as we could. After a light breakfast of beef and damper we would saddle up with unusual care, looking well to girth and crupper, and make our start from the night's camp as noiselessly as possible. Sometimes over an hour would be spent in tracking up the horses that had perhaps changed their ground; when, however, we came across their last night's camp we would proceed with the utmost care, as the slightest noise might start the mob. The moment the horses were sighted, and I sometimes thought the black boys

could see through a ridge, there was a final girth up, a placing of the pipe in the pocket, and the orders were given by the head man, generally my brother, as to the direction in which the mob was to be headed by the light weight of the party, who was ordered to take the first "pull" at them. It was always, I recollect, thought best to give them a good bursting at first, though the ground was often very rough and dangerous, the ridges thereabouts growing a short grass tree that not unfrequently would catch the horse's feet and send him flying, giving you a fall that at once put you out of the hunt. It was especially exciting when the mob was got down on the river flats and nearing the yards, for it was there the unbranded and wilder colts and fillies would make their effort to break away, and we used to try and arrange to have a fresh hand ready waiting there to tackle them. When not joining in the hunt, sometimes for want of a sufficiently good nag, after seeing the rails down and the yard ready, I used to listen intently for the first crack of the distant stockwhip announcing the approach of the wild mob, soon to be followed by the rattle of the horses' feet. Some of the horses often staggered with distress against the stockyard rails after a big gallop. Of course the capture would be followed by a good deal of excitement in overhauling the mob that might not only prove rich in unbranded colts, but include some gay old rogues that preferred their freedom to everyday work, and had been long missed.

We hadn't many visitors to the station, but I recollect to have greatly enjoyed the visit of Edward and Arthur Wienholt, who came for horses they had formerly purchased at Mangoola. The friendship we formed then became a very lasting one, and we have carried it through in after life with much pleasure to us both. The Wienholts were then commencing their long pastoral career, and laying the foundation of the large properties they have since formed into an English company. Together with many others I may in these pages refer to, they belonged to the old Darling Downs set, which is synonymous for high character and good faith, not less than for every kind of enterprise and improvement in the culture of live stock.

After a good turn amongst the cattle, my brother and I thought it best I should learn something about sheep, so I went over to Glenlyon to camp out with a lambing flock, and get there initiated in the then good old-fashioned system of lambing ewes by hand. Time has long since brought a change in this respect, and the lambing of the present day is left to nature without assistance, and takes place in paddocks, the smaller the better. In the year 1855 I write of, the flock of dropping ewes used to be in charge of a careful man accompanied by a mate, who gathered in the day time the ewes whose lambs had dropped that day. At the main yard, which was of hurdles, there were a series of small yards for different mobs of ewes and lambs, according to their

age. The longer you could keep the several drops apart the better they would thrive, and in this employment I found, there and on the Namoi in after years, that the blacks and their gins gave valuable and inexpensive help.

In the present day in pastoral Australia, with the huge properties that are worked on a corresponding scale, it would be impossible to find the slow and patient labour in the country required to lamb down by hand say from fifty to a hundred thousand ewes. The ewes are now left to lamb as undisturbed as possible in their paddocks, and fifty to eighty per cent. of lambs is considered a fair increase, whilst in old shepherding days I have on Liverpool Plains got as much as a hundred per cent. from flocks of about 1,500 ewes, which flocks often lambed out to within five per cent. of their flock number. Of course the total extinction of the native dog, or in more settled districts the semi-wild dog, is a *sine quâ non* for a fair lambing in paddocks, which must depend, after the essentials of green grass and water have been satisfied, upon the absence of wild dogs to give you what I have above stated is considered to be a fair lambing under the paddock system. Had the old price of sheep been maintained it would have paid squatters best to lamb by hand, notwithstanding the wage list, and thus get fifteen to twenty per cent. more lambs; but now it is doubtful whether the game would be worth the candle.

Headley and old Dunlop, the sheep overseers I

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served under at Glenlyon, were both Scotchmen, and thoroughly understood the practical working of sheep and their habits. Later on I shall have occasion to describe sheep-farming on a much larger scale; but I never regretted having been broken in at Glenlyon to follow ewes and lambs with a bough in my hand, to hobble a refractory ewe and make her suckle a motherless lamb. I had, moreover, to do everything I was told, and many a mile have I walked of a morning, and that before breakfast, after the hobbled horses of the overseer till the tinkle of the distant horse bell warned me I was approaching the objects of my search, generally feeding on a bit of sweet grass in some hidden gully.

I also took a turn at sheep washing when shearing time came round, which was a very rough operation in those days, and not unlike the English process. The mania for spout washing and steaming the sheep had not set in, as it did some few years later in southern Queensland, when it turned sheep washing into the most complicated as well as the most expensive sheep operation of the year. The shearing was done on rough slabs and under a barked roof, the wool table a clumsy affair, and the wool press a long lever with a box attached, the whole business being a rough and inexpensive job, very different to some of those big sheds that I knew in after years, the building of which cost a goodly sum, and, indeed, represented the capital outlay of a small station—to wit, the Jondaryan woolshed on the Darling Downs,

*FIRST TASTE OF BUSH LIFE.*

that was stated to have cost £5,000. Glenlyon was only a small station, and in the rough. High prices for wool and the rapid development of the pastoral industry soon created a great improvement in the management of sheep properties, managers vying with each other in the smartness of their work.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A TRIP TO THE "NEVER NEVER."

AFTER some months at sheep station work an opportunity presented itself by which I was able to start for the then so-called "Never Never" country on the Dawson, to assist a man named Archie McNab to get a tract of new country he had taken up for Mr. Master and my brother reported upon by the nearest Crown Lands Commissioner, which was required by the Land Act. McNab was a good old Scotchman, but by no means a brilliant explorer; he had, however, been out there before, and had secured a good run for himself, afterwards called Kianga, which became the property of his excellent widow in after years.

The Commissioner we had to meet was the late W. H. Wiseman, who was located for the time being at Rannes, one of the very outside stations of what was then called Northern Queensland, but which is now in the Central District. So for Rannes we had to make, and it was then a journey that involved no little danger owing to the fierce character of the Dawson blacks, who had committed already some isolated murders of shepherds and stockmen. We



made the best preparations we could, getting each a couple of the hardiest tried horses on Mangoola that we knew would last the journey out. We carried arms, McNab a double-barrelled fowling piece, self a Tyrolese rifle, with which I could make excellent practice. We took a black boy, from whom we expected great things, but when we got to Dalby, the furthest township in the direction we were bound for, hearing from his tribe, I presume, about the Dawson blacks, he bolted and left us in the lurch.

To get to Dalby we had to travel over a great part of what was then the cream of the Darling Downs, quite unfenced and only partly stocked. It consisted chiefly of rolling plains, growing barley, kangaroo and oat grasses, that grew in some cases as high as a mounted horseman, but which the heavy stocking of after days has long since extinguished. No better country for sheep and cattle existed in those days, now much of it is under the plough. Dalby, a veritable city of the plains, only boasted in those days of a store and a couple of public-houses; now it is a big township, and is the capital of the Western Downs. Leaving it, we traversed the largest plains I had up to that time ever seen. We passed and camped at Bell's celebrated station of Jimbour, then travelling *viâ* Charlie's Creek we entered the timbered country of the Burnett District to Burandowan, which boasted in those days of having more sheep upon it than any station on the

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Darling Downs. It was carrying 65,000 sheep, and as sheep washing and shearing were in full swing the place rather astonished us with its bustle and work, though in after years I was destined to see many a bigger shed. Washpools have been given up since those days, and the rum cask forms no longer a part of the shearing supplies, for the sheep washers, who were a good deal in the water, used to expect their three glasses of grog a day. Now everybody shears in the grease, the extra carriage of the dirt having been met by the advantages of railway carriage.

We camped a couple of days at Burandowan, and watched the shearers making big tallies. At Bوندooma (Lawson's), the next station we passed, there was a notice up warning travellers with sheep of scab being on the run. This was the first and last I ever heard or saw of that pest in Queensland, a pest that had nearly ruined squatting in many parts of New South Wales and Victoria, an insidious and almost imperceptible insect that causes the valuable wool to fall off, and is the source of terrible suffering to the poor sheep, which can be seen rubbing against every post or tree they can get near.

A few stages of some twenty miles a day brought us to Rawbelle, then the furthest out station on the Burnett; the country, so thickly timbered throughout our journey from Charlie's Creek, getting more open and somewhat richer. All this sheep country, it is sad to reflect, has long since

ceased to be fit for that purpose, and the district has since been turned into cattle stations. In the fifties it bred good sheep and grew fine wool, but when the superior grasses were eaten out and grass seeds prevailed, an end was put to sheep farming on all the eastern waters of Queensland, with the rare exceptions of the Springsure country and Peak Downs, that still retain their good wool-growing properties. From Rawbelle to Rannes we had something like a hundred miles of unstocked country to travel through, using all precautions to avoid surprise by the blacks, such as camping for the night without fires, eating our supper before we made the night's camp, tethering our horses so as to have them handy, and watching back to back against some big tree. Here it was that we felt the want of a black boy.

When we reached Rannes, a sheep and cattle station belonging to the Messrs. Leith Hay, who had been assisted in their large undertaking by Mr. Thomas Holt, of Sydney (who thereby earned the name of the "Haymaker"), shearing operations were in full swing, and there seemed to be a large number of highly-paid hands about. To protect this outside station there was a sub-inspector of Native Police, one white sergeant, and half a dozen black troopers, who camped at some little distance off the homestead, which consisted chiefly of a lot of rough bark buildings, whilst on the opposite side of the head station the native blacks were encamped to the

number of several hundred, their fires extending over a mile. These blacks, we were told, were by no means civilized yet, and given to robbing the huts of the outlying shepherds. They were daily employed in stripping bark for the manager, who paid them by the occasional gift of a bullock.

Having introduced ourselves to Mr. Charles Leith Hay, the managing partner, who shared with us his rough accommodation, he in turn introduced us to Mr. Wiseman, who, although quite unable to accompany us and report on the country, gave us the necessary permit and signed the documents securing the land we wanted. It was impossible to be in Mr. Wiseman's society without feeling its charm, and his powers of description were as great as his varied experience. He gave us a glowing account of the country the Messrs. Archer had just taken up about 80 miles north-east of Rannes, describing it as first-class sheep country, something like the Darling Downs; but in after years, when I passed Gracemere, as the Archers called their hospitable station near Rockhampton, and recalled this description, I reflected how little it had been borne out by practical experience—it turned out good cattle country, and nothing more. Listening, however, to a man of Mr. Wiseman's experience, one could not help feeling that there was a boundless future in the further pastoral development of Queensland to the north and west, and when, years after, of which more anon, I was offered an opening to stock and develop

the richer country of Peak Downs, I often thought of Wiseman's sanguine anticipations. Singularly enough, Wiseman, some years later, was appointed Crown Lands Commissioner at Rockhampton, the town built on Messrs. Archer's station, and I then spent many an evening in his house listening to his reminiscences of Italy, and of the days when he had spent his fortune in the best of European society, for old Wiseman, notwithstanding the rough surroundings of Rockhampton's early days, ever remained a gentleman of the most cultivated tastes.

We rested our nags for a few days at Rannes, but were anxious to get back, as we liked neither the camp nor its surroundings. We returned by the same track, and were not altogether astonished on nearing Rawbelle at being overtaken by a messenger from Rannes, who gave us the bad news that the native police had been attacked at night at Rannes, and five of the six troopers killed, the sixth being desperately wounded. It was supposed that the native troopers had been decoyed to their fate by some of the black gins. Marshall, if I recollect right, was the inspector, and no doubt had been saved by his camping at the head station. This slaughter created a great stir in the newly-formed district, and other police, then sent for, no doubt made the wild blacks pay for it. But the cause was a want of management, as the blacks had been unwisely employed, and thereby got to know the daily habits of both station hands and police,

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which they had unfortunately turned to advantage. I shall have occasion later on to allude to some other massacres by blacks which, like this one, denoted the folly of not keeping the wild blacks at arm's length for some years, at any rate, after the first settlement of the country.

We returned to Mangoola in a leisurely manner, glad to have accomplished the object of our journey, and not sorry to rest a bit at the end of it. The wide stretch of the Darling Downs and the scope of the pastoral country beyond it had mightily impressed me, and I came back from the "Never Never" a good deal wiser and more self-reliant.



THE DARLING DOWNS—FREESTONE CREEK, NEAR WARWICK.





## CHAPTER V.

### DARLING DOWNS.

AFTER my return from our Dawson trip circumstances rendered it advisable that I should obtain wider experience, and on paying a visit after stray horses to Yandilla, the fine station of the Messrs. Gore on the western side of the Darling Downs, I gladly accepted an offer made me by Mr. Ralph Gore, the resident partner, to help amongst the cattle, joining two very excellent young fellows already there in the bachelor establishment of "The Cottage," at Yandilla, where I spent a couple of useful years of "Colonial Experience" happily enough—the years 1856 and 1857.

Yandilla was even in those days one of the most improved and comfortable stations on the famous Darling Downs. Though flat, Yandilla could boast of country as rich as any on the Downs. The Condamine ran at the head of the run into an immense lagoon at Tummaville, and issuing from this big sheet of water, one of the largest on the Downs, the river formed two branches, which united again at the lower end of the run. The country between these two branches, sometimes seven or eight miles

in width, was first class, owing to its depth of alluvial soil; much of this land is, I understand, now laid down under lucerne. The head station of the Messrs. Gore was a very comfortable one, denoting the easy circumstances of a family possession that had never suffered from want of capital outlay. It stood, and stands still, on the banks of Grass Tree Creek, a short way from its junction with the western branch of the Condamine, which in flood time became somewhat inconvenient, as the creek would back up and flood the garden. There were comfortable huts both for single and married couples and a capital brick house for the resident partner, with an excellent garden that grew, amongst other fruit, every variety of grapes. A schoolhouse and chapel had not been forgotten, and altogether there was an air of comfort and plenty about the place.

No doubt the system of shepherding the sheep when I came to Yandilla meant a large number of hands, and these required rations and attendant expenditure; but the price of wool was good, and the Yandilla clip used to fetch from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a pound, roughly washed on the sheep's back. Besides which the Darling Downs squatters were beginning to reap the sterling fruits of the Victorian gold output, those goldfields having exhausted the local meat supply so that towards the end of 1856 Victorians and Riverina men who had fattening country began to send buyers to the Darling Downs to secure sheep, prices rising high in consequence. There was also

## *DARLING DOWNS.*

a demand for breeding ewes to stock the new country to the north, and these also fetched high prices, so that it was no wonder Darling Downs men had a good time, and began purchasing their valuable freeholds and to do things liberally. From this period, in fact till the financial crisis ten years later, the squatting outlook was of the palmiest, enabling great improvements to be made in the keeping and breeding of Merino sheep. Elaborate washpools and woolsheds were gradually erected, and the working man, whether overseer, bushman, shepherd or carrier, began to lay by the foundation of a competence.

For cattle the demand was more limited. Still tallow was 40s. to 50s. per cwt., or about double the present price, and a good return could be obtained by boiling down the cattle that on the then lightly-stocked fattening plains of the Darling Downs used to put on a degree of condition impossible in the present day. It was a good time altogether, and a good few made solid fortunes by selling out at the right time, whilst others travelled north and west to fresh pastures, which it will be my pleasure to describe later on.

My work at Yandilla, like all station work in Australia, was entirely in the saddle, and chiefly consisted in mustering cattle, that were by no means as quiet as they should have been, on the outskirts of the run, and for this my experience on the Severn came in very useful. The difference between the

two stations being that whilst there were mountains at Mangoola, at Yandilla there was scrub, and to get wild cattle out of the scrub many more hands were required, and a good deal of art had to be brought into play to decoy the cattle out of the scrub and get them into the yard.

It will interest the reader, especially if he is a youngster, to describe shortly the *modus operandi* adopted. We used to start on a clear, moonlight night with two or three hundred mixed cattle that were fairly quiet, and drive them to some good feeding ground near the edge of the scrub, where the tracks out of the scrub showed that the scrubbers (as scrub cattle were called) went that way to feed or water. The lowing of the quiet mob would before long be responded to by that of the scrub cattle, which generally had some unbranded bulls amongst them that were sure to lead the scrub cattle down to the quiet ones outside. When they had got pretty well mixed, the eight or ten hands required for this job would surround the whole lot at a safe distance, and, if a sufficient haul had been made, drive them rapidly away from the scrub on to the open country, where the rushes of the wild cattle could be better met. It was often a hard job to ring them up and steady them so as to get them under weigh for the stockyard, which often meant a drive of eight or ten miles. Sometimes, if the "dart" had been misjudged, we would lose the lot, and our night's work would be thrown away ;

but that seldom happened. When we got near the yard there was sure to be a scamper and some hard galloping, the wild bulls generally making off; but we used to get rid of them by telling off one of the hands to shoot the biggest of them, which they did with a handy carbine.

Of course, galloping by moonlight is deceptive and dangerous work, especially where the timber is thick, but it was generally left to the horse as much as possible, though some otherwise good horses were not to be trusted for night work. We used to get to the yard in the early morning light, and then quickly satisfy ourselves whether we had made a good haul or not. There would generally be some extraordinary big bullocks, cattle that had occasionally been away for years, as the Yandilla cattle had at that period been somewhat neglected. The following day there was the branding up, always a tough job, especially with old calves of twelve or eighteen months, and I have seen some queer chases and upsets, when an eighteen months bull would take it into its head to "clear the yard." But we were active in those days, and it has been my lot to have the horns of a cow, within an inch of my trousers for nearly the length of the main yard, racing to escape her, to end with a heavy tumble on the other side of the yard, amidst the shouts of one's mates.

Some serious accidents, of course, occur when cattle get hot, or are naturally vicious and charge.

Many a horse has been gored on the run through not being quick enough to get out of the way, and some men in the yard have occasionally been served in the same way. The worst accident I ever knew of at Yandilla, was that of a fine young bullock driver tackling a young bullock to break in, in the pound of the stockyard. By some mischance, in reaching over the yoke he was trying to put him in, the long horn of the beast pierced the eye of the poor man, right through the skull, the young fellow being swung about by his head on the horn of the bullock.

Old Thompson at Tumnaville, and Jemmy Pont at the head station, were the Yandilla stockmen of those days, both steady men with nothing flash about them, typical hands at their work, Thompson, the elder man, being a nailer in the yard, and Jemmy Pont with his light weight a "sight for sore eyes" at drafting cattle on the camp, that cutting-out business being a good deal like polo, and requiring a horse quick on his legs, and up to every twist and turn of the beast that is being singled out. This kind of work on an old camp horse will often throw a new chum, as he isn't sometimes quick enough when his horse props to follow the sudden turn of a beast, and great is the laughter accordingly when he gets pitched off.

We had many a good camp after the scattered herd up Grass Tree Creek, or occasionally on the lower run on Russell and Taylor's Cecil Plains boundary, when their men joined ours to muster

the big Condamine plain. We used to want a lot of men for that job, and take our fastest horses, as although, bar melon holes, the plain was smooth going, cattle would spy you out at a long distance and give you a bursting gallop to head and turn them, their bumping galloping outline showing oddly on the distant horizon of the plain. I remember we could all sing a bit, and every man gave his song in turn before making up the fire and turning in. On one of these occasions I remember an odd incident occurring to me. One of the boys dragged a log to the fire, out of which popped a snake, who made for my bed, and took refuge in one of my long boots, then doing duty to prop up my saddle as a pillow; we had to kill him in the boot, and I had to ride the next morning with one boot only, as I would not risk my foot being probably scratched by the fang of the snake.

It was on one of those jaunts to Cecil Plains I first made James Taylor's acquaintance; though a bit rough, he was hospitable, and full of yarns of bygone droving days. He had been through the mill, rising from head stockman to that of part owner of a very fine property, and knew a fat beast as well as any man on the Downs. At the time I speak of, 1856, he was making the most of the high price of tallow to boil down all the fat cattle he could get, and find money to stock his own and partner's station with sheep, which, when he had bought out his partner, made him the wealthy man he became.



For Cecil Plains, then thought rather open for sheep, turned out excellent sheep country, and a good centre for the purchase of travelling sheep, and became one of the most profitably worked properties in that speculative way, on the Darling Downs. This and the steady acquirement of land in and round Drayton and Toowoomba, made James Taylor a big man, his shrewd businesslike capacity being sought for in many directions. He represented Darling Downs in Parliament for some years, during which he for a bit filled the position of Minister for Lands and was afterwards transferred to the Legislative Council, a seat in which I think he occupied till his death. Nearly forty years after the old times I speak of, on one of my Australian visits, I called to see him slowly passing away, surrounded by a devoted wife and family, after a long, honourable and highly successful career. He was often called the "King of Toowoomba."

If our days at Yandilla were full of work our evenings were musical and pleasant, there being often a guest at the family table to give us news of the stations around, and tell us how our neighbours were getting on, in these social and hearty days of Darling Downs; days I have always looked back to with the greatest pleasure.



## CHAPTER VI.

### DROVING EXPERIENCES WITH CATTLE AND SHEEP.

I now made a contract with Mr. Gore to drive ten drafts of fat cattle from Yandilla to R. J. Smith's boiling-down establishment near Ipswich, a matter of something over a hundred and twenty miles. I had a couple of good Yandilla black boys to assist me, and my mob generally consisted of about 150 head of fats. I had power to sell any of them to butchers on the road, which was better than boiling down, a process wasteful even in those rough days, and all the more so since the method of making extract of beef, which has greatly increased the profit of boiling down for the fat alone, had not then been discovered.

I was lucky in my droving and did well, getting to know every tree from Yandilla to Ipswich. My first stage from Tummaville would be Felton, Alfred Sandeman's place, in whose absence Whitchurch did the honours of that excellent property. Next camp I made was Etonvale, then as now owned by Arthur Hodgson, who still, as Sir Arthur Hodgson,

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leads the rank of old Queenslanders. John Watts was his managing partner of those days, a very hard-working man and full of good nature. I remember my Yandilla cattle knocking down his yard, one wet night, and making away over the Felton back ridges and his insisting in helping me to track them before breakfast the following morning. It was doing me a good turn, but that was his way, and most of the Downs men were of that sort. From Etonvale I generally used to get to the next stage, down the range past Drayton and the Swamp to Helidon, where I got a yard and a hearty welcome from William Turner, who had ceased to be the "fighting Turner" of old days, though he would still be glad to fight his battles again over a glass of grog surrounded by his beautiful and musical children. From Helidon I passed or camped at Grantham, Gatton, Bigges' Camp, and Laidley, as the stages fitted. I generally stayed at Ipswich, resting my horses until the cattle were boiled down and the tally in produce of tallow was declared. A good beast would yield from 230 to 280 lbs. of tallow, though I have seen a good lot go over 300 lbs. of fat, and occasional beasts go as high as 400 lbs. Boiling down, pure and simple, has fortunately died out, though as an adjunct to the extract of meat, which yields as valuable a return as that of the tallow, it still continues in factories now widely distributed over Queensland.

Eighteen hundred and fifty-seven was a very



TRAVELLING CATTLE, QUEENSLAND.



## *DROVING EXPERIENCES.*

wet year, and that affected Yandilla, which was naturally a wet run, a good deal of the country between the two branches of the Condamine being often under water. This occasioned wet legs in riding, and sowed the seeds of rheumatism in after life. The black boys and I were nearly caught in the falling of a hut on a wet night at Gatton, and had a job in travelling the cattle on the rotten ground between Gatton and Bigges' Camp, otherwise we fared well enough.

There is something fascinating in a drover's life, however anxious you may be or little rest you may get. It gives you complete exemption from mental effort and imbues you with a knowledge of the habits of the stock you are driving, such as cannot be obtained in any other way. You get to know that such a beast, the rogue or rowdy one of the mob, will at a bend of the road make for the creek on the roadside or "gammon to shy" at some passing teams. The life in the open gives you a splendid appetite, and as you are generally off by dawn, sometimes by starlight, I leave my young readers to guess with what pleasure you reach the flat on which you will steady your cattle to feed, whilst you eat your own breakfast which you had sent your black boy on to get ready. The getting ready meaning undoing the pack, hobbling the pack horse, lighting a fire, and boiling the "billy" for tea, the food being generally cold boiled salt

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beef and bread or damper, as the case may be, unless indeed you were out of both and had to make Johnny cakes of flour and water, with a sprinkle of salt and soda. Johnny cakes are often best toasted a second time.

On my return from delivering my last mob of cattle at Ipswich, Mr. Gore offered me the appointment of cattle manager at Yandilla, but considerations arose that led me after a year's experience of droving cattle to the pots to try my hand at overlanding sheep to Victoria. It was only the year before that overlanding wethers from Queensland to Port Philip had commenced, and that Melbourne buyers had found their way to the Darling Downs. The venture had evidently proved remunerative, and all the young sheep were being bought up at golden prices for delivery a year after. This gave a fillip to Queensland squatting, so good humour and briskness prevailed on the Downs, for all sorts of horses and carts were wanted for droving outfits, and anything like a decent man got 30s. a week as drover for a good long job of six months.

I came across Dr. Rowe, of the Campaspe in Victoria, a clever, amusing and successful man, who was then buying on the Darling Downs some twenty thousand three and four year old wethers at from 10s. to 14s., which he hoped to resell when he had fattened them on his stations at a pound to twenty-five shillings in the Bendigo market. Dr. Rowe's

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head man McLeod wanted an overseer for the second mob of sheep to be travelled, Butler, now of Kilcoy, having engaged to take the first lot, so I engaged with him for the second lot, and it is not too much to say here that Butler and I did nearly the whole of the work, McLeod attending merely to riding ahead, and giving the required notice to stations on the line of road. I was glad to get this chance of travelling some thousand miles across the larger part of the great back country of New South Wales, and acquiring not only experience of the country itself, but a knowledge of the many methods employed by a host of squatters in putting it to the best use.

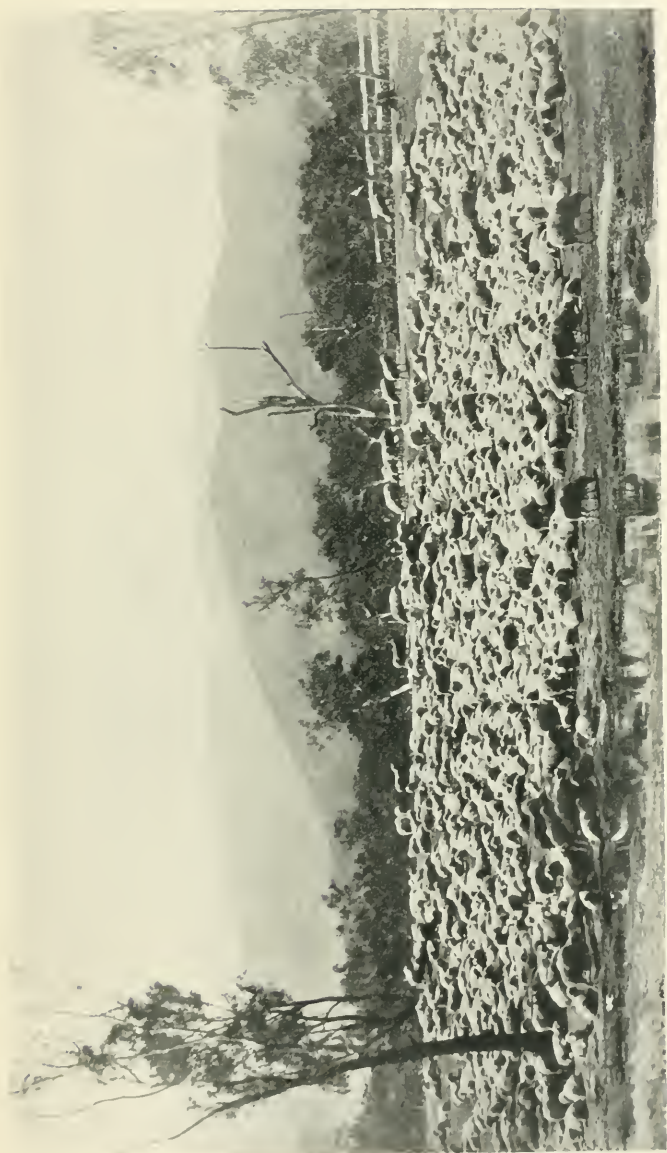
For those who don't know the business, I think I ought to describe at the commencement of the trip the every-day routine of travelling such a large lot of sheep. The person who was in full charge and on whom the responsibility rested, and who chose the road and went ahead to give notice according to the Act, was Mr. McLeod above mentioned. Under him Butler and I took charge of the sheep, divided into two lots of over ten thousand each, and these lots travelled a day apart from each other, and of course camped separately. Each lot had a cook, and a horse driver who drove the cart which held the rations, cooking utensils, men's swags and tents. The cart went on ahead of the sheep and stopped at the place fixed upon for the camp, the horse driver seeing to the fixing of the tents and making every-



thing ready for the arrival of the shepherds, who generally appeared on the scene about mid-day, as the allotted distance of six miles a day can by starting the sheep at sunrise be easily accomplished by noon. When once in view of the site of the camp the shepherd would go as far as he could, so as to give his flock a good feed before nightfall. On occasions, of course, he might have ten miles to drive in the day, and in that case he would have to keep his sheep going to do the distance. Two men had to watch in turns for the night, thus every man in the camp had half a night's watch every third night. These watchmen had to make up the fires round the sheep when they got low (such being made to scare the native dogs) and to continue walking round the camped sheep, most of which, if the feed had been fair, would lie down and not stir. If they had been badly off during the day and there was any food near the camp they would draw out and give the man on the watch a good deal of trouble.

When the morning star appeared (reminder to many a shepherd of his task and care) the watcher would first rouse the cook and then wake the men to roll up their swags and get ready for their day's work. Fresh mutton was generally used, though we used to get beef for a change whenever we could. The sound of chops fizzing in the pan (shepherds like fat things) gave an interest in the coming meal, which was generally quickly got through, as





TRAVELLING SHEEP, QUEENSLAND.



the sheep soon get uneasy on the camp after daylight. The overseer in charge would then cut off the sheep to the shepherds in five flocks of two thousand each; the eye got accustomed to masses of sheep, and we got to divide them with remarkable accuracy. Every third day we counted the sheep through "brakes" made for that purpose, often on each side of two saplings growing about three feet apart, through which the sheep would run out in twos and threes. The art of sheep counting is the result of long habit and quickness of eye, some sheep overseers being able to count sheep through an opening nearly a hurdle wide.

After starting my lot of sheep I used to eat my own chop in peace, and then mounting my horse and looking at each flock as I passed it, would follow the road to be pursued till I had reached what I thought was a good camping place for the night, when I generally selected the spot and lit a fire to indicate it, the desiderata of a good camp being good elevation, water, wood, some saplings for the tents, and last, but not least, an absence of ants, especially those of the formidable kind called "soldiers."

We started from Dalby with a good outfit and fair lot of men. Our route lay by Canal Creek, the McIntyre brook and through the Beebo scrub. The water on this main road south was getting short, the track dusty and grassless, and the season generally bade fair to be a dry one. At Yallaroi, after doing

a couple of days without water, our twenty thousand wethers became unmanageable and got away from the shepherds as they neared the creek and smelt the water. Fortunately we headed them down the creek and succeeded in turning them on horseback, but it was not till late that night and by the light of the moon that we succeeded in rounding them up and camping them in one lot. We were seriously afraid of losses, but on counting them the next morning we found them all right. That day several of our sheep dogs perished of thirst, and here I got a nasty kick from a horse that I was driving in hobbles up to camp, the calkin of the horseshoe entering my shin. For some days the pain was so excruciating that I had to ride in the cart, but got ease eventually by lancing it and using that then general remedy, Holloway's Ointment, with powdered lump sugar to eat off the proud flesh.

After we got out of the thick country, we crossed the McIntyre and "Big" rivers, and travelled through the far-famed Liverpool Plains and the sea-like expanse of Golatheral and Gundamaine, fine country that I was destined to be concerned with later on. We then came to the Namoi River, and as the country was pretty thickly stocked, we were a good deal hunted by the owners of sheep through whose runs we passed, who made us keep to our strict distance of not less than six miles a day. Steering south after crossing the river, we travelled through a long stretch of thick salt bush country

to the Macquarie River, which we crossed 60 miles below Dalbo.

Near here we met with our first bad accident. One of our drovers, Richardson by name, who was the jocular man of my lot, got astray on a by-track with his flock, and ride where I would, I could not reach him before dark. He, however, turned up at our camp on the road, past the middle of the night, without his sheep, and this in a country much infested with wild dogs meant a regular smash. His story was that on finding himself quite astray on a creek he had followed instead of the road, he had camped his sheep at nightfall, and made up roaring fires to keep away the dingoes and assist in his being found, for the country was very thick. He kept his watch and walked round his sheep when, unfortunately, he was attracted by the rise of the late moon, which looked to him like a fire. He had followed this *ignis fatuus* over a ridge and then got bushed, being unable to retrace his steps to his flock, which was thus left to the mercy of the wild dogs and nearly cut to pieces. Fortunately for his own self he had struck the road the main lot had travelled, and found himself at our camp in the early morning. We did all we could to muster the lost sheep, but they had been scattered everywhere and lay dead in heaps, so we only managed to recover about half the number the man had had with him, which made the loss come up to quite a thousand. This threw a gloom over

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our party, as we had up to this time got on very well for the first, which as far as the country went was the most difficult, half of our long journey. Richardson was so chafled in the camp for having taken the rising moon for a camp fire that he left in despair as soon as I could replace him.

From the Macquarie we crossed over to the head of the Lachlan, which river we followed down a long way to Booligal. The most of the Lachlan country was extremely dry, and the expiring water-holes were often filled with dead beasts, which made it difficult to get decent water, even by boiling it. We had a tight pinch of 40 miles without water before we got to the Lachlan, a distance difficult to accomplish by sheep without water. We filled our water casks for our own and the draught horses' drinking, and sent the riding horses ahead, the overseers as well as the men having to tramp it, which made us powerless to go after any flock that got astray. There was little feeding on the part of the flocks, however, it being all hard driving in thick dust and great heat. This squeeze was the worst one of our journey, and any ill-timed accident would have been fatal. I shall not forget when we approached our first water, the Burrawangbineah Lagoon (the water of which was white and thick); the sheep smelt the water, and at once got lively, and noses in the air started galloping to the lagoon. The Yallaroi scene was acted over again as far as the mixing of the flocks went, but having daylight

for it, we managed to get the sheep camped in two lots. We lost, however, a couple of valuable draught horses, faithful creatures, who, after a good drink, lay down never to rise again, after having nobly pulled us through. I recollect McLeod staring at the figure the Burrawang manager asked us for two horses to replace them, but, as we couldn't do without them, we had to "pay up and look pleasant."

The country round these parts, I don't think, has ever had a much worse drought than that of the year we passed through it, 1858. Years after, the Burrawang grew into a noted sheep station, celebrated for sheep cutting heavy fleeces of wool, and it became in the hands of the Messrs. Edols, father and sons, quite a show place for the profitable husbandry of sheep on a large scale.

The Lachlan was famous country for cattle in those days, but as the only water lay wholly in the river and in the lagoons on the frontage, the herds spent their time travelling to and from the river to the pastures of the back country, chiefly fattening plains with light belts of timber. So that life meant a kind of long drudgery to the cattle of the Lachlan before water was made in the back country, for the beasts were always on the move, excepting when they rested awhile on the river camps after that long—and often polluted—drink that came to them, perhaps, only once in thirty-six hours.



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Water conservation by tanks and dams and artesian bores has since made an alteration no doubt in lessening the trouble as far as water is concerned, but with the increase of water there has come an increase of stock rendered necessary by the higher rentals claimed by the Governments of most of the Australian Colonies, who have often unjustly rented the squatter in proportion to the very capital he has laid out on his leasehold, instead of its being the other way about.

It was singular that throughout all our journey of nearly seven months we had not had a drop of rain, though when we reached Booligul and there approached the plains of Riverina we found the grass springing from recent rains, which had the effect of making the sheep perfectly unmanageable at night, so that we had to mount men to keep them within bounds of their camp till the time came for the daily morning start.

At Booligul we turned off the Lachlan to cross the wide plains of Riverina, country which I never then thought would have attained its present value. In those days it was a dead level, treeless, uninteresting country, with widely-scattered tufts of grass growing amidst ubiquitous clumps of salt bush, that corrective herb which sets the seal of healthy sheep country throughout most of Australia. The land, of a clayey reddish tinge, gave little hope then of being worth a couple of pounds an acre, which it realizes now for sheep farming



purposes, though in many places wheat and other cereals have been successfully grown. Time may yet bring about a system of irrigation by canalizing the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee, and Murray Rivers, such as will irrigate the country and probably turn it into a garden. At present Riverina is content to feed Melbourne with fat beef and mutton, to grow splendid wool, and enrich a set of fine fellows who are hospitable to a degree, whether you visit them at their comfortable station homesteads or in those suburban palaces they have built near Melbourne with the proceeds of their well managed estates.

When we neared Deniliquin, then a very busy squatting centre, we felt we were approaching the land of gold, for there was any amount of excitement about, and travelling was evidently an expensive game, for it cost a pound to put up a horse for a night at the hotels, and the same money was asked for a bottle of grog. After punting the sheep across the Murrumbidgee at Deniliquin and the ana-branch of the Edwards, at Hay, we crossed the famed Murray at Moama or Maiden's Punt, on a corduroy bridge, and felt lighter hearts at nearing the end of our journey, and being at last in Victoria.

A week's more droving brought us to Dr. Rowe's station, Resedown Plains, on the Campaspe, and I shall not easily forget the delight and comfort with which we delivered up our trust, and once

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more slept in a comfortable bed, free from nightly alarms and disturbing watches. But for that loss of Richardson's mob we would have made an exceptionally good trip, considering the dryness of the season. Dr. Rowe was, however, quite satisfied, and gave Butler and myself a handsome bonus beyond our salary.

After a few days' rest at Dr. Rowe's I started by coach to Bendigo which a lapse of four years since my last visit had greatly altered both as a town and as a goldfield, for brick edifices of considerable pretensions were taking the place of the old tents and shanties, and the alluvial wash stuff of endless earth heaps was being puddled by machinery for the third or fourth time; besides which gold had been found in quartz reefs, which gave direct permanence to the field. After a few days spent at Bendigo amongst old friends I drove down to Melbourne in an enormous Cobb's coach, horsed by a team of a dozen spanking horses that travelled swiftly over a well macadamized road, very different to my last experience over the same country.

Melbourne I found increasing rapidly, good buildings were springing up on every side, not forgetting the increasing suburbs which play such a conspicuous part in the settlement of this great city. I was glad to look up my friends and get a few days of perfect rest and easy enjoyment. I had a good deal to talk about after the conversational restraint

## *DROVING EXPERIENCES.*

of a long bush trip, and soon found that overland from Queensland to Victoria was considered almost a feat, so I felt somewhat proud of an achievement that had certainly considerably increased my self-confidence.

So much for the present on the subject of sheep and cattle droving, undoubtedly a fine healthy life to lead for a time, and an excellent introduction to a thorough knowledge of country, live stock, and the men you employ.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LIVERPOOL PLAINS AND LLANGOLLEN, NEW SOUTH WALES.

OVERLANDING promotes restlessness and ambition, so I was soon anxious to get fresh work and applied, from Melbourne, to Mr. Edward Lloyd, whose brother John had just married my cousin, to see if he could put anything in my way. Mr. Edward Lloyd was managing partner of Lloyd Brothers, great squatters on the Namoi in New South Wales, and resided as a member of the Sydney Upper House at Denham Court near Sydney. I received an agreeable letter from him, asking me to come and stay with him and talk matters over; this I was very glad to do, when, a few days later and after a better passage than my first in the *Governor General*, for a second time I entered the Sydney Heads.

Mr. Lloyd and his wife (a daughter of Major Johnstone of Annandale) received me with the greatest cordiality; their home, Denham Court, was a delightful country house, nearly twenty miles out of Sydney, and handy to the railway, by which the metropolis was reached in a little over an hour.

He soon told me that his firm were about to begin shearing at Burburgate, and that he proposed taking me up with him to look after the wash-pool, where they were to spout-wash the sheep under a new system, thus promising me another insight into sheep farming on a large scale, at which I much rejoiced. In the meantime, I spent a few weeks most agreeably, amid social surroundings that I had been a stranger to since I left the Darling Downs.

When Mr. Lloyd, who was a busy man and went to Sydney nearly every day, was ready, we made a start for the Hunter River, by steamer, viâ Newcastle, intending to drive up to Burburgate with a horse and buggy which we took with us. The Newcastle boat started at eleven p.m. and landed you at this centre of the coal industry of New South Wales by early daylight. Of course Newcastle was a small and uninteresting place in those days; still the coal is there in quantity and quality pre-eminently greater than at other places on the Australian coast; and so long as that is the case, Newcastle must be a place of importance and offer to the obsolete old passenger boats of the southern hemisphere as colliers the haven of a useful, if somewhat dirty, old age.

From Newcastle we travelled through Maitland, a bustling country town, thence, viâ Singleton, to Muswell Brook, traversing a country very much like dear old England in its fresh pasture, gardens and

cultivation, with this addition, that on the Hunter peaches, apricots and grapes grow out of doors in rich variety. The Hunter is certainly a country of rich gardens, vineyards and fattening farms, and as such often bears the name of the Garden of New South Wales. Certain choice growths of wine, both red and white, such as Cawarra, Kaludah, Kinross, and one or two vintages are grown on the Hunter that closely approach the choicest growths of the Rhine, not excepting even such brands as Steinberg Cabinet and Rudesheimer Berg. Given fair age the white wines of the Hunter are superb.

We made easy stages through this favoured land, ascending from Murrurundi (then called the Page) the Main or Great Liverpool Range, dividing the eastern waters of the Hunter from the western watersheds of the Namoi, Barwon and Darling. The ascent was arduous in those days, though nothing so steep as Cunningham's Gap in Moreton Bay, or the Blue Mountains on the Bathurst line. We were glad, however, to stand on the plateau of the famous Liverpool Plains, about to open its wide expanse of fattening pastures to us, for we had still seventy or eighty miles to travel to Burburgate, and we hoped for fine weather to do so, so that our wheels shouldn't clog; buggy travelling becoming exceedingly awkward after rain in black soil.

Liverpool Plains, taking it all in all, is I think the finest pastoral country I know of in the big island

## LIVERPOOL PLAINS AND LLANGOLLEN.

that forms the Australian continent ; it has had over fifty years of continuous grazing, and it still fattens both sheep and cattle as well as it ever did. Its position, which is to Sydney much what the Darling Downs is to Queensland, both nestling as they do close to the main dividing range, renders it, now that there is railway connection between the fattening pasture and its market, easily accessible to a city of half-a-million people. The country, a rich black soil, taken as a whole is undulating and picturesque, in many parts dotted with volcanic hills and its wide plains studded with clumps of the mayall, a tree that greatly resembles the drooping willow. The mayall has ceased to droop, as it has from time to time been fed off by stock in droughts, but it is still picturesque, and its dark wood emits the fragrance of the violet, and is greatly in use for pipes and stockwhip handles, its ashes also being useful for curing kangaroo skins. In the old days, clumps of saltbush used to surround the mayall trees and sheep, panting in the exuberance of their fat, used to be attracted to the shade, the whole forming a pastoral look out, hard to beat for interest to the squatter. But the greed of gain, the *crescit amor nummi*, has led Liverpool Plains to suffer, like all other "crack" districts, from over stocking.

The best attributes of this fine district are shared by not much more than a dozen crack stations like Warrah, Walhollow, Bando, Breeza, Mooki Plains, Gallendaddy, Curley, Gundamaine, Edgeroi, Gala-

thetal, and a few others, that have all long since become freeholds, and in carrying nearly a sheep to the acre for their owners have managed to enrich them, and that sometimes for more than one generation. For what wise man will care to part with a really good station?

We yarned as we walked up the range, myself happy to gather information regarding a district which Mr. Lloyd thoroughly knew, and I was almost sorry to jump again into the trap and trot off to the Willow Tree, a good roadside inn, where the road to Tamworth and New England turned off. Here we were fortunate enough to get a feed of strawberries for our tea. After a rest we tackled the wide monotony of Breeza Plains, stretching as far as the eye could see, and covered with luxuriant grasses. Live stock were all fat, and my heart rose at what seemed to offer a squatter's paradise. At Breeza, where we had to camp for the night, we put up at a dirty little inn rejoicing in the name of the "Pig and Tinder Box." The beds had previous occupants calculated to murder sleep, so we were not sorry to get away early the next morning.

The following day was to be our last on the stage to Burburgate, and one of our first sights on the plain was a string of wild pigs making for water. Further on we passed on the plains a fine team of mules bound to Maitland from Burburgate, and known as Lloyd's mule team. Mr. Lloyd told me



## *LIVERPOOL PLAINS AND LLANGOLLEN.*

they used to do double the work compared to an ordinary horse team. He seemed to know all the teamsters and horsemen as they passed by, and it was pleasant to have the characteristics of the district and people explained to you by so good a judge.

We arrived at Burburgate towards sundown; it was evidently the centre of a large establishment, the working part away from the owner's and manager's residence, everything ship-shape, close to the bank of the Namoi, and possessing every reasonable comfort in a good house and the usual wide verandah which always accompanies an Australian house. Besides which there was a fine garden, sloping to the river, full of peaches, figs and grapes.

We were received by Mr. Charles Lloyd, the youngest of the three brothers, Mr. John Lloyd, the eldest, being in England. The station was in a bustle of preparation for washing and shearing, and the day seemed hardly long enough to crowd into it the business required to be got through. The Messrs. Lloyd were practical men and full of energy, and I felt at once it was a good thing for me to be in their service.

Soon after we arrived, however, it became apparent that the large body of sheep that had to be shorn at the station that year could not well be worked at the new washpool, as the grass was failing on the river and the washpool was too near the woolshed. The job, as it was proposed, would have

meant a good deal more starvation than was advisable for the sheep, a large number of which had to travel over fifty miles from other out-stations, which I refer to later on in my description of Messrs. Lloyd's properties.

So washing was knocked on the head for the year, and they shore in the grease, and I was content to get an insight into the working of a big shed before starting for Llangollen, near Cassilis, at the head of the Hunter River, a small sheep station Mr. Edward Lloyd offered me the management of when my engagement at the washpool fell through. This property Mr. Edward Lloyd had lately bought, together with Melville Plains, otherwise Gullen-daddy, from Mr. Alfred Denison, a successful squatter, and brother of Sir William Denison, who had been for some years Governor of New South Wales, and was a member of that illustrious family which furnished a Speaker to the House of Commons and Churchmen and scholars of distinguished attainments. Llangollen was prettily situated amongst the mountains of the Munmurrah, one of the heads of the Hunter River, and although it was a sour-grassed, rough bit of country requiring plenty of rock salt for the stock, it grew healthy sheep and good wool, and was a profitable little place. There was a charming homestead that had been made comfortable by Mr. Denison and his manager, Mr. Lambe, so I stepped into snug quarters, and though I had to be my own overseer,

storekeeper and book-keeper, and was hard at work from "rosy morn to dewy eve," I never recollect spending a happier year than that of 1859, which was passed there, amongst other advantages, with a library of choice books at my command, left by Alfred Denison to his successor.

I had an excellent couple as servants. William, the man, used to keep my bridle and stirrups clean, an unusual thing in those days, and sunrise found him with my old horse ready at the door to go the usual before-breakfast round of sheep counting at the out-stations, none of which were more than eight miles from the head station. The flocks had to be small in that mountainous country, say from 1,000 to 1,500, there being according to the old style of things two shepherds and a hut keeper at each station. We employed new chums a good deal for the sake of economy, sometimes Germans, and, if a married couple, the wife kept hut. Owing to the nature of the country sheep were often lost, but we soon used to get them, William and I being very good hands at finding them. They always made for the top of the highest ridges.

My busy life at Llangollen was greatly cheered and its influences softened by my proximity to the station of Cassilis, which was only two short miles from Llangollen. This station was owned by Messrs. A. and W. Busby, Mr. Alexander Busby being the managing resident partner. Mr. Busby was the beau ideal of an Australian squatter; though

beyond middle age, fresh, vigorous, and with the courtly manners of the old school retained through the trying ordeal of the early settlement of the district he had resided in for thirty years. The estate of Cassilis was like that of Llangollen, nearly all freehold. The improvements were excellent, and included a stone house, capital stabling, and the first two-storeyed wool shed I had seen. During my residence at Llangollen I was made welcome to the evening meal whenever I liked to trot down on Mr. Denison's old cream-coloured cob, an animal who knew every step of the road, Mr. Alfred Denison having been Mr. Busby's intimate friend as well as his nearest neighbour.

Cassilis was the stronghold of the celebrated B.Y. stud, so that, with an early developed passion for horses, I was often amongst them, and on good terms with Trotter, the stud groom, whose assistants were ever ready to fetch out my cob, when, after a pleasant evening at Cassilis, I returned to my quarters ready for my early duty ride of the following day. I had always cause to be thankful for Mr. Busby's neighbourly hospitality. It kept me up to the mark, making me more tidy about my costume, and I ceased to carry my pipe in my pocket when Mrs. Busby was near, and gave my wide-brimmed cabbage tree a brush before I started for my call.

My employer paid me a visit at shearing time, and was pleased with my progress and attention; in fact,

he hinted that he had promotion to more responsible and highly paid work in store for me. He thought I must be lonely, so he told me he had arranged to take on the station a new chum, George King, second son of Mr. George King, of Thacker, Daniell and Co., one of Sydney's most respected residents. George King was a first-rate fellow, with a good disposition and honourable instincts. Being a native he was already a good rider. We got on capitally, and remained close friends for many a year afterwards. Whilst at Cassilis we enjoyed a good many hunts after wild bulls at the head of the Munnurrah, which varied the monotony of our sheep-station life.

The Munnurrah was a flowing brook, and I was able to spout-wash the sheep by natural spouts formed by damming up the creek instead of requiring an engine and pumping the water from a water hole with a centrifugal pump. As there was not much dust between the washpool and the wool-shed, the wool was clean and well got up, and I was complimented upon its condition. It fetched 2s. a pound in Sydney, including locks and pieces, not a bad price even for those days of good prices all round. Llangollen in after years became the property of Dr. Traill, of Collaroy, and it paid him and the partner who managed for him very handsomely indeed.

My residence at Llangollen enabled me to form the valuable acquaintance of Dr. Traill, then managing partner of Collaroy, a fine black soil estate about

eighteen miles from Llangollen. Dr. Traill had previously earned for himself at Tenterfield the reputation of a first-rate station manager, and I was eager to "sit at his feet," so to speak, and improve my knowledge of sheep management. It is not too much to say that in Australia the successful manager of a large sheep station may aspire to fill any place, from that of the clear-sighted dispenser of justice from his own bench of magistrates to that of Premier of his Colony under responsible government.

Traill had certainly very remarkable abilities befitting the sheep autocrat that he became. He was, I am glad to say, most friendly to me, and many was the trip I took to Collaroy, especially at shearing time, to handle the large fine-framed sheep Traill had succeeded in breeding at Collaroy from a continuous importation of Rambouillet or French Merino rams, which undoubtedly give the maximum of wool and meat with robustness of constitution. The breed is still located at Collaroy, though excellent old Traill has gone to his long rest, after a remarkable career of useful prosperity. I am glad to say that after over forty years of existence the flock is still in great demand, my friends of the Wienholt Estates Company, amongst others, often recruiting their flocks from that source.

Dr. Traill's overseer for a time was Jesse Gregson, afterwards of Rainworth, Queensland, and now the well-known and capable manager of the Australian





COLLARROY SHEEP.





Agricultural Company in Australia. Mr. Gregson had arrived in Australia as a gentleman new chum to stay with his connections, the Busbys of Cassilis, and after a brief experience, to his credit be it said, he “humped his swag” and made his way to Collaroy, applying for work as a station hand. He soon got made under overseer and then head sheep overseer, learning thoroughly and from the best source that practical management of live stock which serves him in such good stead now. Few Australian careers have shown more determination of character than that of Jesse Gregson.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE NAMOI, N.S.W.

AT the end of 1859, Mr. Lloyd offered me what he thought was a more useful and important outlet for my energies in the assistant managership of Messrs. Lloyds' Burburgate and other Namoi properties, under the managing partner, Mr. Charles W. Lloyd. I was loth to leave such a perfect little station and home as Llangollen, as also my very good friends and neighbours; but there was the probability of a considerable position hereafter, and a rise in salary at once, so I started with no little reluctance the same way back to Burburgate, via Coolah and Melville Plains, some 90 miles. Coolah was a rough little place in those days, and I was told an amusing story about the late Mr. Alfred Denison arriving there at night on his way to Melville Plains, and, on asking for accommodation, being given a blanket to camp on the sofa, all the bedrooms being occupied. As it was dark, he did not make out his camp very well; but in the morning, finding a soft object at the foot of his sofa, he found he had lain all night on a sheep's paunch dragged there by a kangaroo dog.

Melville Plains (Mr. Denison's former station) was a very fine property indeed, the plains and creek dotted with drooping mayall, with plenty of salt bush at their foot. It was not well watered, but they had begun to sink wells, and found a good supply, and it was a country well worth spending money upon. Where it was not purchased by the leaseholder, it fell gradually to the selector; though, in the end, the capitalist had the best of it, as it was better for pastoral than agricultural purposes, and the district is chiefly now used for sheep fattening purposes. Melville Plains was then managed by a smart Irishman, Dopping by name, who was one of the few men I have met with who could jump his own height of six feet.

On my arrival at Burburgate, I was located in the house, and made comfortable, and soon put into harness. The properties then held by Messrs. Lloyd Brothers were amongst the finest and most fattening on the Namoi. Burburgate had a long stretch of both sides of the river, with Baanbah north and south below it, and, forty miles lower down, the splendid stations of Gurley and Edgeroi, on which some 120,000 sheep were grazed, or about half what would be carried on the same area in these later days of fencing and water making. Edgeroi and Gurley consisted of rolling downs and black soil plains, with sufficient shelter for sheep in clumps of mayall and emu bush.

Adjoining these, and nearer the river, Messrs.

Lloyd owned the fine shorthorn herds carried on the Gundamaine and Galatheral stations, which fattened cattle that always topped the Sydney market. These stations were also much understocked, or at any rate would have been considered so in these days, but they were then lightly stocked, so as to turn off as many fat cattle as possible, the breeding cattle being chiefly carried at Manila, a rougher piece of country under the range.

I have always considered Gurley and Edgeroi, and Gundamaine and Galatheral, the best properties for growing and fattening sheep and cattle that I ever saw under one holding, such as they were when the Lloyds had them. They became partly the prey of selectors in after days, and are now held by several owners.

Burburgate was the head station, and all these other out-stations had efficient overseers, who furnished to the head station monthly accounts of the stock under their charge, together with the money orders drawn in payment of wages, etc., on the head office. The system was complete and orderly, and books well kept by a bookkeeper. I was soon initiated in the work, and accompanied Mr. Charles Lloyd round all the stations, being much struck at the extent of their undertaking and its organization.

The lambing arrangements were particularly successful, being chiefly carried on at Burburgate under the supervision of the best of overseers, Old

Mackenzie, who was a model in his way; slow and sure, he was never known to put his horse out of a walk, but he was out at daylight, and between that and dark had gone the round of the lambing flocks, and looked into that most important of all jobs, if you want to get into numbers. The run being well watered, it was especially adapted for lambing, and certainly results were obtained there that I have never seen equalled elsewhere. We often got 90 to 100 per cent. of lambs over the ewes put to the ram, a result very different to that obtained in paddock lambings now. The Burburgate lambing was by hand, and a great many blacks were employed.

In the Lloyds' cattle management an equal amount of care was shown. At the head station they bred bulls from imported shorthorn stock and the Peel River Company's shorthorn cows. The breeding herd was kept apart from the fattening bullocks, and when they came to a certain age the weaners were taken out and herded. The heifers were also regularly herded and kept apart for a time; then, of course, cattle paid better in those days than they do now, when a general carelessness, the result of poor markets, has, I am afraid, crept upon cattle farming generally, I hope not to remain, for there is nothing more unsatisfactory than a badly-managed herd, or more pleasing to the eye than a well-managed one.

Shearing soon came upon us with all its prepara-

tions and various responsibilities, and Mr. Lloyd gave me charge of the wool shed under his supervision. Fortunately the season was a good one, and we had kept as much grass round the place as we could, though we should have liked a good deal more. Burburgate shed was the biggest on the river, and that meant that you could generally get the pick of shearers, who far and wide applied year by year for a stand therein. We could put on forty shearers and had cover for a whole day's shearing, some 1,500 sheep or over; then there was every convenience for penning up the sheep, and the whole affair worked well. Some of the hands could easily shear over a hundred a day, though that number is now exceeded through our friend Fred Wolseley's machines in the present day, which possess the enormous advantage of doing away with cutting the sheep. This matter of cuts had been for many years a standing disgrace to our civilization, as a large proportion of sheep in the days I write of were turned out sometimes cut all over, to be irritated for days by the swarms of flies that infest the country. Tar was put on the cuts certainly, but that was only a counter irritant.

The picking up of the fleeces and their skirting, rolling and pressing was all interesting work, and came under the special charge of the wool-sorter, who had been there for years, and knew every shade and degree of the true value of the Merino staple that has done so much to make New South

Wales what it is as a colony. A good deal of the wool was engaged beforehand to carriers, who had selections and homesteads on the river, and looked forward to their share of the Burburgate clip in the way of a cheque for its carriage.

I must say it was a grand sight when eight or ten bullock teams loaded with the Burburgate wool started together; teams loaded with over twenty bales each, sixteen bullocks to the team, the bullock driver with his formidable whip and the offsider with the humbler stick. Such a cracking of whips and guttural gees were heard when the long string moved on, and the patient bullocks all strained their necks to the stiff yoke. A cheery sight this great pastoral harvest, the result of widespread toil and active management.

We had no event of importance during our shearing, which averaged over 10,000 sheep a week. We made, however, an annoying loss of some 1,200 yearling sheep owing to cold rain coming on them after shearing, and on empty bellies. This gave me a lesson I was not slow to profit by in after years, and that was never to shear hoggets except in warm weather, and that on full bellies.

I must here mention the great price obtained in this September, 1860, for the first lot of fat wethers that arrived from Gurley and were shorn at Burburgate, viz., 21s. 6d. each "off the shears," sold at Homebush, near Sydney, driven over the Bulga ranges (drover McMillan), the highest figure I ever



knew Merino wethers to fetch in New South Wales. The reason was that the market was bare, and we had not reached the present days of over-production.

After the shearing settlement, which was in those days washed down with a glass of grog and a remark from the boss, if the shearer was a good one, that there would be a stand for him next year, I was glad to get a short run to Sydney and rest my legs, which is the part of the body most affected in looking over a shed. Lloyd gave me a letter of introduction to one of a family of merchant princes in Sydney, who acted as his station agent, and who has lived, alas, to see his throne a good deal shaken by financial troubles. However, in those days everything was *couleur de rose*, and I thoroughly enjoyed both the hospitality of that merchant prince and that of my young friend George King's father. As I had only a small cheque to spend, I was not long in retracing my steps, and once more getting into work.

We had some very good fellows working at Lloyds' in those days, most of whom have had successful careers. We were all fond of cricket, and amongst my pleasantest recollections was that of a challenge of the township of Tamworth, some fifty miles above Burburgate, to play our Lloyds' eleven a friendly game of cricket on their own ground. Our ride to Tamworth was delightful, as we broke our journey at the hospitable station of the Bells of





BULLOCK TEAMS WITH WOOL.



Keepit, whom I was destined to meet in Queensland later on. Our game was a good one, and the visitors, I am glad to say, managed to beat the home team. Our victory was celebrated by a feast given by the leading inhabitants of the town, some of whom the following day accompanied us part of the way back. Jolly days, when a ride of fifty miles on a hot day was neither here nor there.

Tamworth in 1860 was a thriving township built in a beautiful situation on the Peel River, which is the head of the Namoi. Tamworth was a good deal assisted in its progress and importance by the proximity of the fine estate of the Peel River Company, a freehold grant of over 300,000 acres of mixed land, chiefly of a very picturesque and useful description, of sound sheep country, growing a profitable class of Merino wool that generally manages to top the market for New South Wales wool. This estate has for over forty years had the benefit of the management of the Hon. Mr. Philip Gidley King, whose acquaintance I made about this time.

Mr. King is a man made for the place, having, like Dr. Traill, an unerring judgment in the breeding of live stock, which he has turned to the best account for the company he is still managing. I have given an account later on of the Peel River Estate and the King family, written after my visit to Australia and to that property in 1893-94.

Writing of Tamworth and the Peel River in 1859

recalls an event that had occurred in the neighbourhood to a well-known Queensland pioneer, Francis E. Bigge, of Mount Brisbane, so early as 18th August, 1842, when he was "stuck up" and severely wounded by bushrangers whilst on his way with stock to settle on his station near Moreton Bay. Mr. Bigge, who is still to the fore and lives in the West of England, has himself furnished me with the narrative of the dramatic event—which is one that will interest my readers, as it forcibly brings before them the lawlessness of those early days and the perils then attached to travelling away from settlement.

Mr. Bigge's party consisted of Alexander McDonald, Joseph Nott, and Daniel Collins. This party of four had left the Cowpasture River in July, 1842, with about two hundred head of horses to travel to Mount Brisbane, Moreton Bay; about fifty head belonged to Mr. Mackenzie, and he and Balfour were to join the party later on. The party travelled by Ravensworth, then Dr. Bowman's, on the Hunter River, stopping there, about August 12th, for a few days on their way to the Peel River where they camped on good grass. When out the following morning looking up their horses Bigge was joined by a stranger who said he was also looking for his horses, and with whom he had some conversation before parting; this stranger no doubt being one of the bushrangers who afterwards attacked the party.

After mustering their horses on August 18th,

Bigge's party made their start and had not got far on their road before three horsemen appeared out of a patch of scrub and ordered Bigge and his men to dismount, presenting three double barrels at them to enforce their demand. Bigge's party dismounted, and Bigge being ordered to strip, which he refused to do, one of the bushrangers, who was no other than the celebrated "Long Tom," seeing Bigge trying to disengage his pistols, which were all the arms possessed by the party apparently, shouted to his mate, a man called Wilson, to shoot Bigge. Wilson fired without effect. "Long Tom," however, shot Bigge through the shoulder and Bigge fired ineffectually with his pistols, but received other shots from the bushrangers through his coat, and receiving no assistance from his party, seems, from Evan Mackenzie's letter to his father, Sir Colin Mackenzie of Kilcoy, describing the event, to have behaved very pluckily and scared the bushrangers, whose swag and horses were found in the mob of Bigge's horses the following morning.

Bigge lay for some time in Nimingar hut near Tamworth, where Dr. Jay attended to his wounds which did not heal until a splinter of the bone was taken out of his shoulder.

The bushrangers were seen by Martin the postman the night of the attack, sixteen miles off, "Long Tom" sending Bigge a complimentary message by him. They did not, however, long evade capture, Wilson being taken by Corporal Kirk and Trooper

Stevenson on September 4th, and "Long Tom" a few days after, the third man who formerly belonged to their party having been "turned off," Wilson said, for not firing at Bigge when told to do so. Probably he was made away with. In March 1843, the following year, when arraigned at Maitland assizes, Wilson and Thomas Forrester (*alias* "Long Tom") both pleaded guilty to wounding with intent Francis Edward Bigge. Their pleading greatly surprised the judge; in reply to his question they said they had both been transported for life. They were sentenced to death and executed at Newcastle jail some little time after.

The Judge (Sir William Burton) told Mr. Bigge that after they were executed a free pardon and £300 had been received in the Colony for Wilson, and that he was the natural son of a baronet well known in London society.

Our nearest township at Burburgate was Gunnedah, eight miles off, a distance I used to trot with my excellent horse "Foxhound" in half-an-hour, though, generally speaking, Australian horses are more taught the slow canter than the fast trot as a journey pace. To get to Gunnedah we had to cross the Namoi, often in flood, so we used to stretch a thick taut rope to giant gum trees on each side, and to this rope fasten a big block, by which heavy weights, even to bales of wool, were drawn from one side of the river to the other. It was considered a good trial of

strength to pull yourself over hand over hand. One morning, however, when going over with the mail bag, my exertions made it drop out of my waistband, and I had nothing to do but to plunge into the flooded stream and strike out after it. It was a plunge of many feet, and the current took me down a long way, but I managed to save the bag all right, which to an indifferent swimmer might not have been easy.

Dry as Australia is, generally speaking, it is strange how often you are called upon in time of floods to exercise your faculty of swimming. It is strange, too, the number of deaths from drowning that occur in the bush generally; so I give the strong advice to prospective Australian travellers to learn swimming if they don't know it already.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A TRIP TO THE DARLING.

ABOUT this time a proposal was made to me by Mr. Edward Lloyd that I should get my elder brother, then residing on the Darling Downs, to join me in an expedition down the River Darling, some 250 miles below Burburgate, to inspect and report upon two valuable blocks of country on the north-west side of that river, and possessing thirty miles frontage to it. This country lay at the confluence of the Warrego with the Darling, about forty miles below Sir Thomas Mitchell's old camp, called Fort Bourke, and Mr. Lloyd had obtained the refusal of the blocks from his brother-in-law, Dr. Jenkins. Mr. Lloyd proposed that if we approved of this country we should enter into a partnership agreement with him to improve and stock the run on joint behalf, on his finding the capital to do so at an easy rate of interest.

As the country on the Darling, which up to this time had been chiefly used as a harbour of refuge in great droughts for the settlers in the upper parts of its various heads, was commencing to attract atten-



tion not only from its intrinsic grazing qualities, but from being found navigable in certain seasons below Fort Bourke, there was a good deal to recommend the proposal, and I lost no time in submitting it to my brother, whose reply came in person, as he "made tracks" to the Namoi at once, riding over from the Darling Downs in a very short space of time. Mr. Lloyd gave us *carte blanche* to fit out our small expedition from Burburgate, an expedition which, although it was to be mostly through stocked country, still possessed considerable elements of risk, as not much was known of the country off the river, especially up the Warrego, the blacks about those parts being yet uncivilised.

We lost no time in getting our expedition ready, as the rainy season was approaching and we expected floods to succeed the dry weather that had laid the country pretty bare. We secured a few hardy station horses and the services of "Flash Billy," king of Burburgate blacks, who took as mate another good boy, "Jonathan" by name, whom he called his brother. "Flash Billy" was a wonderful fellow; he was a dead shot, and a first-rate cook, rarely missing a black duck when firing for the pot and cooking him perfectly afterwards. He was always in good humour, and never short of hobbles, as he had a marvellous way of making up his equipment when it ran short. He would drink, of course, when he got grog, but the brass plate on his splendidly developed chest, proclaiming him King of the

Burburgate tribe, was not without its pledge of responsibility to his employer and his "honour amongst thieves." Often in colonial after days have I wished for "Flash Billy" and his invaluable services in tracking and finding horses, and looking out for good camping places, but he was tied to his kingdom and would never leave it for long.

The country between Burburgate and Walgett was called the "Namoi," as being watered by the river of that name, till it became the Darling after its junction with the Barwan. All this country was divided into good cattle stations, having from 10 to 15 miles frontage to the river, either on one side or the other, and perhaps 20 miles back, but seldom taking in both sides. These stations were generally pretty bare on the river frontage, owing to the cattle feeding and lying about near the water; but further back from the river the country got more grassy, with plenty of mayall and saltbush, a great deal of which has now disappeared, but which in old days turned out the primest cattle for the Sydney markets.

There were hardly any sheep west of Gurley in those days. These cattle stations were mostly owned by well-to-do old colonists living in and around Sydney, Richmond and the Hawkesbury, Bathurst and so on, who were content to inspect their properties once a year, to decide on the fat stock to be taken off when ripe for market, but who left the general charge of the station to smart



NATIVE BLACK. LOWER NAMOI, N.S.W.



responsible stockmen, who worked the station with black boys. These boys had wives, or black gins, who generally did the honours of the stockman's hut, and that with no little grace and good humour, furnishing generally a good feed, of prime beef and damper, to the hungry traveller, whether he came from up or down the river.

There were few paddocks in those days, and we generally camped for good feed, as far away from head stations as we could. Our tent was a strong calico fly, open at both ends, our saddles and packs occupying the centre, and ourselves taking one end and the black boys the other. With plenty of leaves from the sandal-wood or emu bush, and a waterproof sheet to keep out the damp, with a good pair of blankets to boot, we lay very comfortable and snug.

Our first stage of 150 miles to Walgett, then a wretched-looking place, brought us to a couple of primitive public-houses and a very expensive store, where we renewed our supplies, as we were told that between Walgett and Fort Bourke we should have to depend on the kindness of stations to allow us to buy flour, tea and sugar, which became scarce articles the further west you went.

We limited our day's stage generally to some 25 miles a day; this chiefly depended on the state of feed, and the détours we had to make to avoid bad crossing places necessitating often the fording of creeks, or, if it was the main river, a big

swim. If canoes were not handy at the usual crossing place, we had to construct them of bark, stripped from the big river gum, by the indefatigable arms of our black boys, who were splendid hands with the tomahawk. These canoes would be cleverly stripped, so as to allow one end to be stopped up with mud, and take in our saddles and packs, to be guided over the river by Billy and Jonathan, who swam like otters, my brother and myself, who were not much behind our boys in that respect, driving the horses after the canoe. Our nags got so used to follow the canoes, that, before our expedition was over, they gave us hardly any trouble in taking to the water and landing on the right side after their swim across.

About 150 to 200 miles more brought us to the country Mr. Lloyd wanted us to inspect, which was opposite Gundabooka, a station then held by the brothers Spence who had settled there very recently, some 30 miles below what is now the big township of Bourke, which was originally founded on the site of an old camp of Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, who had called a stockade he there made of huge gum logs Fort Bourke, after Governor Bourke. The township is now a very important one, being the terminus of the Western Railway of New South Wales and the head of the navigation of the Darling, from the eventual canalization of which, with its probable irrigation, enormous possibilities are undoubt-



BLACK GIN, LOWER NAMOI, N.S.W.





edly in store. Moreover, from its wide meat supplies, it is not too much to say that Bourke may at no very distant date become the Chicago of Australia.

We were at once enabled to authenticate the position of our blocks, Mere and Toorale, by the line of timber that marked the junction of the Warrego River, one of the most important of the confluent of the Darling that join it on its north-western bank.

The Messrs. Spence were very hospitable, and gave us all the information they could. We established our camp on the other side of the river, opposite their head station, and spent a fortnight in thoroughly exploring the country under offer. We also went some distance up the Warrego, that river assuming larger proportions above its junction with the Darling than we could have believed likely by its appearance at the junction; not at all an unfrequent characteristic of central and western watersheds in Australia, which oftentimes have a tendency to die out as they terminate their course. Being midsummer, and that part of Australia extremely hot, we did most of our work early and late, and spent our slack time in skimming the river in our bark canoes and fishing for cod and yellowbellies, as also shooting ducks when our supplies ran short, Flash Billy being the surest sportsman.

Mere and Toorale consisted of lightly timbered and thinly grassed ridges near the frontage, with

wide, arid, and thinly grassed plains at the back of the river. It was then impossible to judge what the country might become thereafter by stocking, but as it stood and we saw it, it compared unfavourably with the Darling Downs country in Moreton Bay, and that of Liverpool Plains we had just left on the Namoi. So much so that we made up our minds it wasn't good enough, and we should go in for something better, and refuse Mr. Lloyd's offer when we got back.

Of course, when we turned back after our inspection, we could not help feeling a little disheartened, but little did we think what that country was to turn out some few years after, when stations on the Darling came to be stocked with sheep, and rapidly improved under the process, so that the district became famous for fattening all descriptions of stock, and growing the finest of merino wool.

The country we refused to take up and stock, oddly enough was destined to form a considerable portion of the famous Dunlop Station, which capped the fortunes of that great shepherd king, Mr. Sam McCaughey, and enabled him to pay the vendor a huge yearly sum as the proceeds of the settlement for this thriving property. So much for the ups and downs of the squatter's life. Had we accepted Lloyd's offer and stocked Toorale, who knows what hard work and good fortune might not have done for us? Amongst other benefits Toorale brought with it hereafter, was a certainty of obtaining great artesian



HUT ON THE DARLING RIVER.



supplies at a low depth, so that the country back from the Darling could be watered by artesian wells to the full extent of its grazing capacity.

Our journey back was a good deal delayed by rains that brought down creeks and rivers "Bankers," and, what with continual swims and short supplies, we became "thin by degrees, and beautifully less." Our black boys, who "smelt home," behaved splendidly in all these crossings and recrossings of flooded rivers, and on one occasion, that will long live in my memory, Flash Billy certainly earned our gratitude by literally saving the party from a watery grave by his fine black fellow's instinct.

We had camped for the night below the big dam at "Bungle Gully," a station owned by a family of the name of Evans, and turned in; the rain that was falling increased to a deluge, flooding our tent, the boys started talking rapidly to each other, and soon after Flash Billy brought the horses to us and woke us up, urging us to shift the camp at once, and get out of the danger of the waters, should the big dam burst. We lost no time in striking camp and going round to the homestead above the dam a mile off, and soon after we had put our things under the store verandah, we heard the roar made by the waters that had burst through the dam, thus realizing Flash Billy's extraordinary instinctive dread. There could be no doubt that, had we remained where we were, nothing could have saved

us, for it was one of the biggest sheets of water in the country, being backed up for several miles.

The only other adventure we had on our trip back was meeting with a white madman, stark naked, who was brought to us by some blacks opposite Brewarrina station. The poor fellow, till he fell in with these blacks, must have existed on berries or possibly on mussels in the waterholes. He had been with those who found him about ten days. He was a muscular, well-built man about thirty, and his skin was tanned a bright red with the action of the sun. He was good tempered and had quite a happy smile. He was glad to put on the clothes we spared him amongst us, and to travel with us to the next station, to await a convoy of native police to take him by coach to the nearest police station. These cases are not unfrequent in the bush, and it is extraordinary how they are accompanied by a happy unconsciousness of the troubles of life. This man had apparently not suffered by his six months' wanderings, for his hair and beard denoted at least a six months' growth.

The new year of 1861 saw us back to Burburgate all right, and we were glad to recruit on fresh food and prime fruits, for the stations down the river had nearly all gone short of rations, and those that had any flour had it weevilly and sour. Tea and sugar had been running short, and what tea there was in use was that old-fashioned green tea so often sent up to the back tracks without ever having seen

*A TRIP TO THE DARLING.*

the East. We had kept ourselves going with fish and wild duck, and beef when we could get it fresh, with "Pigsface" as vegetable, so we didn't do so bad.

After a week's stay at Burburgate, my brother went to Sydney to square up with Mr. Lloyd and hand in our report of the country. Mr. Lloyd behaved liberally to us, and I resumed my work at Burburgate with additional zest, though in after days, whenever we met, we talked of the chances we once refused of becoming squatters on the Darling River.

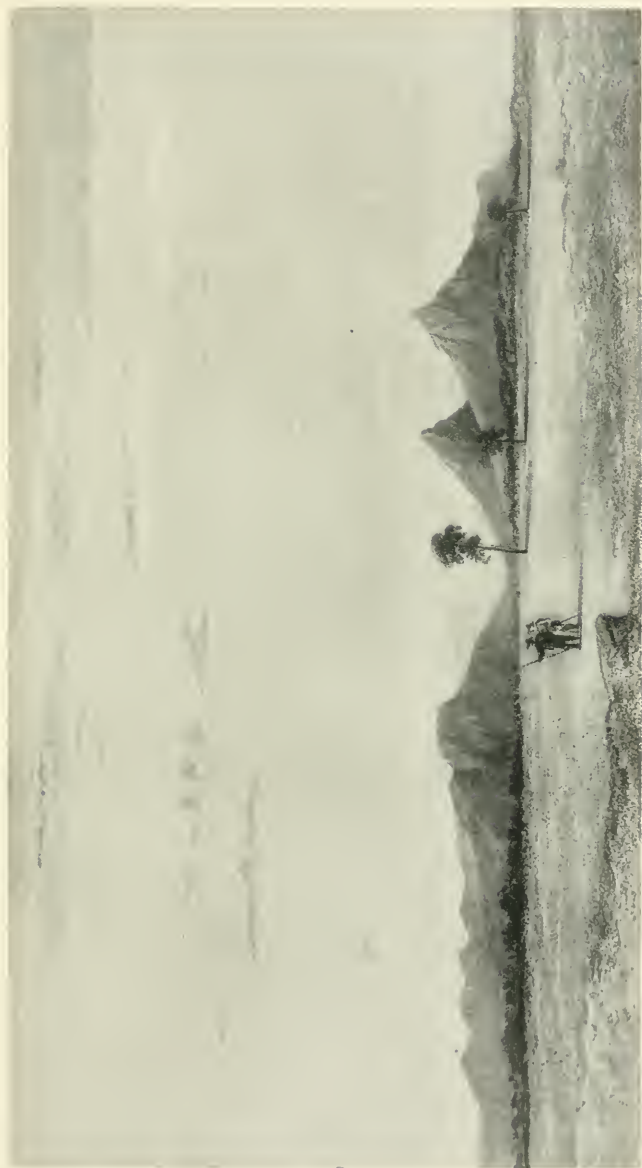
## CHAPTER X.

### PIONEERING IN CENTRAL QUEENSLAND.

I WAS not destined to remain much longer on the Namoi, for early in 1861 I received from Gordon Sandeman, who was about to be connected with me by marriage, an offer to undertake on certain favourable terms the stocking and development of the greater portion of the Peak Downs district in Central Queensland on his behalf.

This tract of picturesque and beautiful country had been first traversed and called Peak Range by Leichardt on his expedition to Port Essington in 1845, when he had named several of the Peaks after the companions of his trip, and he had again sighted Peak Range on his second trip on 19th April, 1846. In the interesting account published of his first expedition, Leichardt gives a sketch of the Peak Range and the undulating plains that surround it, and states that if the plains of Peak Range were only adequately watered they would form some of the finest country in Australia. No wonder then that, some years later, in 1854, the Messrs. Archer made an expedition from the Burnett to take up new pastures in that direction, and secured most of





PEAK RANGE FROM THE N.W., AS SKETCHED BY LEICHARDT IN JANUARY, 1845.



the country on the south or best side of the Peak Range, under the New South Wales land laws called "Orders in Council." The lease of this country, after holding it for some years, they had disposed of to Gordon Sandeman, who, as owner of Burandowan on the Burnett and several other properties on the Dawson, held a prominent position in Queensland as one of its most adventurous settlers.

Meantime the development of the Central and Northern districts of Queensland was attracting considerable attention, and I was flattered by the proposal of dealing with such a large tract of country, though I was sorry to leave a good and certain position for one of considerable hardship and uncertainty. However, as Sandeman promised partnership and the Lloyds did not stand in my way, I accepted Sandeman's offer of stocking the Peak Downs, and, as it was a matter that would not brook delay, bade adieu to the Lloyds and started at once for the north.

I was sorry to leave the Lloyds and their magnificent property, in those days thriftily and excellently managed. Free selection and its accompanying dismemberment have, I understand, since played havoc with that fine country, but in the days I speak of, the good old days of squatting, we were all happy in working early and late—managers, overseers, and men—for the employ we served in. The selector had not sprung up as a thorn in the squatter's side, nor was the "Sundowner" the institution he has

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since become in the country, viz., the man who travels from station to station asking for rations and for work, the second of which he heartily prays he may not get. I will say this for the Namoi forty years ago, that everything prospered in the pastoral districts with the industrious, whether he was a teamster, bush contractor, shearer, or drover; for he did then put by the foundation of a comfortable independence from the well-earned wages he received.

I agreed with Sandeman to rendezvous at his station, Burandowan on the Burnett, as soon as I could get there, as our expedition to survey Peak Downs was to start from that station. So I travelled from the Namoi to the Darling Downs overland and on horseback, following pretty much the same road I had taken three years before with Dr. Rowe's sheep. I made a hospitable station every night, and heard there the squatting news of the district I travelled through and gave mine in exchange over a pipe, and not unfrequently over a glass of grog, if the station drays had happened to have recently arrived.

I made for Warwick, and thence once again traversed the incomparable Darling Downs, hunting up my good kind friends at Gowrie, who were always glad to see me, thence by Dalby, Jimbour, Charlie's Creek to Burandowan, noting everywhere the great progress of settlement on the Darling Downs, and the evidence of comparative luxury

## PIONEERING IN CENTRAL QUEENSLAND.

following the earlier days of settlement. All this was owing to good prices for wool, and a good demand for wethers for the south and breeding ewes for the north.

I arrived in good time at Burandowan, and at once began organizing our party for the Peak Downs expedition, a trip with a good spice of



ROCKHAMPTON IN FLOOD.

adventure in it. Our party consisted of Sandeman and myself, Tommy, a half-caste boy, a first-rate horseman and tracker, and Mungo and Billy, two pure-caste black boys. We took a certain number of Burandowan bred horses, but intended further to recruit our horseflesh when we got to Rockhampton, a journey of about 300 miles, *via* Gayndah and my old road of 1855, past Rawbelle

and Rannes, which I found now quite settled places.

Rockhampton, now the chief town and port of the Central Districts of Queensland and a considerable city, was only in 1861 a stirring and lively township. The wonderfully rich Canoona diggings, an isolated alluvial deposit, difficult to trace or to explain, had started the place in July, 1858, and after these diggings were worked out the exodus of squatting speculation to the central and northern districts from the south had kept it going at somewhat high pressure.

The site of the town, which was virtually determined by the Messrs. Archer in 1855, is, as most of my colonial readers will at any rate know, situate on the Fitzroy River some 40 miles from its mouth at Keppel Bay. The situation is a happy one, below a barrier of rocks, which say "halt" there to the further navigation of the Fitzroy River by steamers of any size. The river is broad and handsome, whilst distant ranges and smaller hills close to prevent any dull monotony. In 1861 galvanized iron played a great part in the buildings of that period, and Rockhampton could not then boast of the many handsome edifices, public and private, which it now possesses. The town presented a busy scene, as many expeditions similar to our own were daily starting west and north in quest of country. The country on the enormous watershed of the Fitzroy seemed virtually boundless, and included the fine

black soil land of which Springsure is now the centre, as well as the fine downs of the Peak Range. But between Rockhampton and the black soil country above named, much country was being taken up as sheep runs, that is now only fit for cattle. Many small stations of that kind were being taken up within a hundred miles from Rockhampton, and these helped in those days of good prices of produce to keep the township going.

All that we heard in Rockhampton of the Peak Downs increased our desire to get there quickly. It was described as a second Darling Downs, only if anything richer. Sandeman was held to be a lucky man to have bought the country, and the Messrs. Archer the contrary for having parted with it. My principal, I may mention here, not content with the big slice of Peak Downs he had already secured, had heard of an outlying part of it held by Arthur Macartney, of Waverley, near Broad Sound, which was said to be for sale, so we decided to go to Peak Downs *via* Broad Sound, and see Macartney, and try and get the country from him.

At Rockhampton my brother Henry joined us from Albinia Downs, and I was glad of his valuable services as assistant from this time out. So our party being thus strengthened, we made our first start from Rockhampton *via* Yaamba, where I remember we saw the carcass of a huge alligator that had been shot at the crossing place of the creek there, thus denoting our approach to their

tropical haunts. From Yaamba we journeyed by Canoona, Princhester, and Marlborough stations, about a hundred miles to Waverley, the property Messrs. Macartney and Mayne had secured on the fine marine plains that there skirt the seaboard and form admirable cattle stations, held by our friends to this day.

Macartney was most entertaining and helpful; he was then in that full physical vigour which often led him in the many rides he took from station to station, to ride a hundred miles and over in one day, and that on the same horse. No man in Queensland, I suppose, has ever ridden as hard as Arthur Macartney has, or has traversed so much of the central and western districts of that Colony.

Sandeman managed to secure the leases he had come to buy, afterwards called Wolfang, which proved hereafter of some importance to my brother and myself, as through subsequent arrangements we became partners in that property.

At Waverley we heard that Thorne, lately of Charlie's Creek station on the Burnett, and a quondam neighbour of Sandeman's, had gone ahead of us to take up the Cotherstone run, a piece of country on the north-eastern side of Peak Range, and as his tracks were still fairly fresh, we determined to follow them over the rough country that separated Broad Sound from the Peak Downs, which was about 120 miles as the crow flies.



The first part of the road was over the main coast range, and meandered, during an ascent of some 1,500 feet, in anything but a straight line, and through rough ranges, where we for the first time heard the "coeeys" of the native blacks. These genuine "coeeys" denoted that the blacks saw us though we didn't see them, and were on that account somewhat impressive. However, we kept watch at night, and without any event of mark found ourselves on the fourth day of our journey at Thorne's encampment, distant but a few miles from the Peak Range, the country Thorne had settled upon being an immense improvement on what we had traversed from Broad Sound, though neither so open nor so well grassed as that which awaited us on the other side of the range.

Thorne was both hospitable and communicative, hailing Sandeman, of course, as an old neighbour who had pioneered with him on the Burnett many years before. He offered us fresh mounts from some of his young horses, which mounts, however, as we found out later on, the splendid pastures had rendered a bit above themselves. We were in great spirits in getting so quickly and safely on the borders of our country, and the prospect of crossing the Peak Range the following day and dropping down upon the splendid plains so temptingly described and sketched in Leichardt's work, filled us with pleasurable excitement. We sat late by the camp fire with Thorne, Sandeman and he talking

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over their old Burnett days, and myself extracting all I could from his overseer about the country, its powers of fattening, and so on.

August, 1861, was a glorious season for the country we came to explore ; abundant and unusual rains had fallen early in the month, filling the many little creeks that headed from Peak Range. The country, which chiefly consisted of black and chocolate-coloured loam, had evidently been burnt before this late rain by the blacks, and the undulating plains that lay under the picturesque peaks that formed the so-called range were clothed with a carpet of burnt feed, forming a vivid green dotted with a variety of wild flowers, also many kinds of wild peas and vetches, wild cucumbers, and other trailing plants I did not then know. Never after, during my long experience of the district, did I see it in such splendid condition—I might, indeed, say glory—as when our little party, after some buck-jumping at the start on the part of Thorne's young horses (which only damaged the packs), started from Thorne's camp, ascended this low range, and dropped on the rolling downs the other side, the most of which country we knew to be included in the tenders that had been transferred by the Archers to Sandeman.

We ascended one of the twin peaks called by Leichardt "Brown and Charlie's Peak," which rose 700 or 800 feet from the high downs at its base, and from that point the country lay before

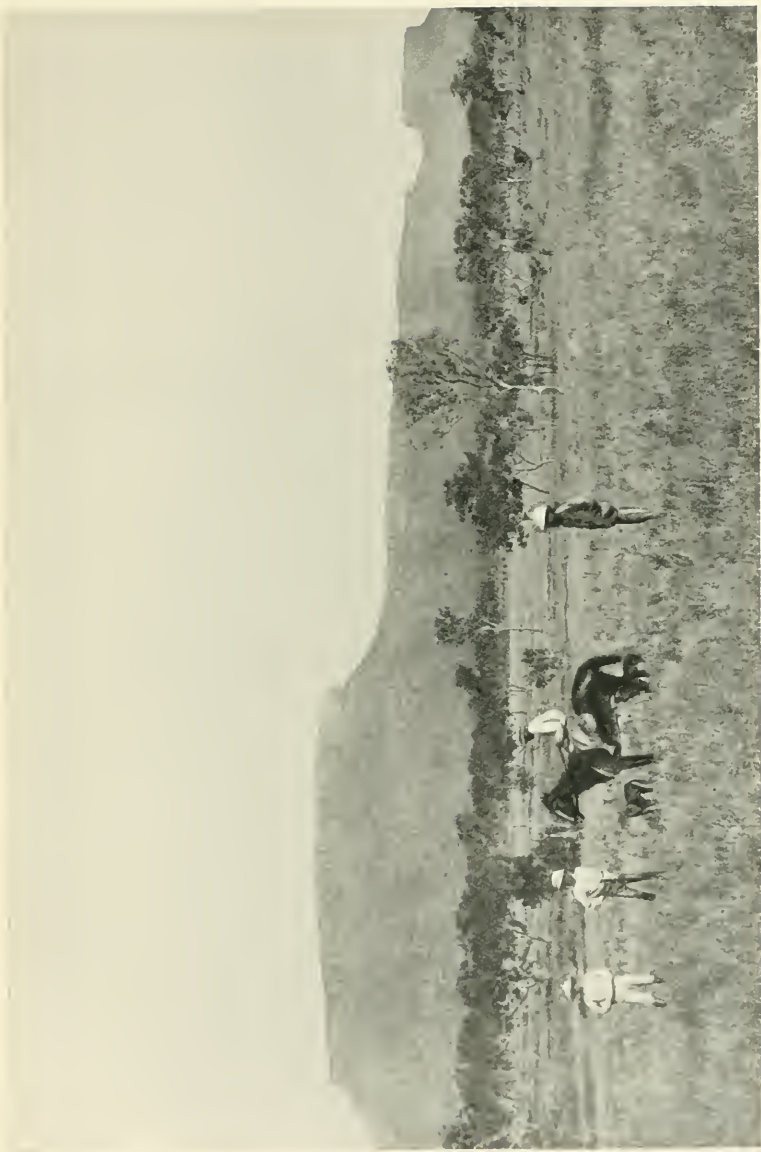


TABLE MOUNTAIN, PEAK RANGE.



us like a map, enabling us to identify with more or less accuracy the site of the creeks and the position of the various blocks on Archer's tracing, which we carried with us. It seemed all open country before us and on both sides, and we could not look upon this vast stretch of open land, clothed with the richest herbage and grasses, without forming dreams of future success and its accompanying fortune.

As we descended from that preliminary survey of our realms to be, and followed the biggest watershed we could make out and trace with our glasses, our spirits rose, and mutual exclamations of interest were the order of the day. The spare horses could hardly be driven along, so anxious were they to crop the sweet burnt feed. Huge kangaroo lazily turned round to gaze at the new intruders before hopping majestically away; bronzed-wing pigeons sprang up on every side with the strong whirr of perfect condition; the grey-headed wild turkey or bustard stalked about in robust alarm; whilst occasional mobs of the statelier emu trotted round us with their usual curiosity. Nature, in fact, both as regards season and time, was at its fill, before the hand of the white man had been able to set its riches to good account. To my last day will I remember with gratification that first impression of the Peak Downs, with its many glories of anticipation.

To Sandeman the sense of possession must have been sweet; as for myself, I thought chiefly of the

responsibility in turning a district so evidently promising to the best account. However, I was full of hope, and although many of my anticipations were destined to remain unfulfilled, I never regretted the fifteen years of my life I devoted thereafter to the development of Peak Downs.

Consulting our charts as we went along, we followed the main watershed above referred to for about 20 miles from Peak Range, making our first camping place on the Peak Downs, strangely enough, as it turned out, at a spot a mile from where I afterwards placed my head station, named Gordon Downs, after Gordon Sandeman. This creek was set down on Archer's chart as Belcombe Creek, Belcombe, in the native Peak Downs language, being held to mean "Baal Camoo," or "no water," not a promising name; and, indeed, in after years—notably in 1862 and 1868—our head station creek did certainly bear out the name the blacks had given it. As the creek had been so recently filled it was impossible to determine its lasting powers, and the same doubt applied to all the creeks we then surveyed.

The country was easy of identification, as the Peaks made excellent landmarks, so we set about the resolute exploration of the creeks that passed through Sandeman's country, which, commencing at the eastern side, had been named Crinum, Belcombe, Capella, Abor and Retro Creeks, which formed the chief watersheds of the southern side of Peak

Downs. These watercourses, which were generally dry, only boasted of occasional water holes; they headed from Peak Range and ran from five to ten miles apart from each other through our country for over 30 miles before they joined the waters of the Nogoa, one of the main tributaries of the Fitzroy, so that the southern portion of Peak Downs meant an area of over 60 miles by 30, all fine volcanic downs land. On exploring these creeks we easily found the trees the Archers had marked A + B. These marks, cut seven years before, were still well defined and reminded us of the pioneering camps of a band of brothers who have had a good deal to do with the early history of Queensland.

The country we rode through was partly black, partly chocolate soil, exceedingly friable and rich; being unstocked and therefore untrodden it was "ashy," and the horses travelled over their fetlocks in the loose soil. It became evident as we went on that Archer's tenders did not include all the country we went through, so Sandeman and I set to work to apply for all the unclaimed land not covered by Archer's tenders, which in all amounted to a considerable area. This work, chiefly travelling lines by compass and averaging on horseback the distance by time, we found very tedious, but there is a kind of "greed of country" that comes over the pioneer, which spurs him up to great efforts if the reward before him is a good slice of rich sheep country. We did not leave our work till we



had made our leases secure and Sandeman had drawn out the applications for the country still unclaimed, to be sent in to the Land Office at Rockhampton as soon as opportunity would permit.

Having finished the survey of Archer's country, that of the blocks we had secured from Macartney of Waverley next claimed our attention, and for this purpose we had been joined by that fine bushman Claudius A. Ker, who originally had taken up the Wolfgang country and sold it to Macartney. So we went on to Wolfgang, at the south-west corner of the Peak Downs; the country, if less undulating in its character, we found exceedingly rich and the pasture superb. It was easily identified by a singular isolated peak resembling a dog's tooth, which Ker had not inaptly called Wolfgang. This rocky peak started abruptly out of the plain to the height of 800 or 900 feet, and was rather difficult of ascent; a cave towards the summit contained salt, which augured well for the saline nature of the pasture. Indeed, in the years of development that followed our first trip no sheep thrived better in the district than those grazed within sight of Wolfgang Peak. From its top a very grand view of the range and the rolling downs that ran up to its foot could be obtained, which in a quiet harmonious way I often thought as fine a pastoral landscape as there was in Queensland. Further on in these pages I have alluded to station life at Wolfgang, which I trust may be interesting to those





WOLFGANG PEAK, PEAK DOWNS.



who have in view the idea of sheep farming in the youngest of the Australian colonies.

Having finished our exploration of Archer's blocks and Wolfgang, there was no time to lose in stocking the country, so I had to start at once with Sandeman to the Burnett, to obtain the necessary sheep for the purpose, intending of course to use Rockhampton as our port. A track to it had already been opened from Vicary's station, which adjoined our country, and we had been able whilst in Rockhampton to make arrangements with some of its adventurous carriers to bring us supplies direct to Peak Downs. These supplies we believed to be on the road up, a road which had the crossings and scrubs of the Mackenzie River to negotiate, and so turned out a very rough and arduous one.

We arranged that my brother should remain on the new country at Gordon Downs, with a couple of black boys and some bushmen that had been engaged from Rockhampton to build huts and bough-yards, till I came back with the sheep. Protection was afforded to our slender force by the fact that we had neighbours in the shape of a Victorian firm, who had bought from James Archer the upper part of Capella Creek and called it the "Peak Downs" Station. This new station was about 16 miles from our camp, an easy distance as things went, and my brother was able to get his meat from there, a track being soon established over the downs between the two places.

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Bidding good-bye to the small party left behind, late in October, 1861, we made our start south towards the Burnett, intending to give a call if possible upon an energetic old Victorian squatter, Mr. Wills, who had settled about a hundred and fifty miles south of Peak Downs upon some fine black soil country similar to ours, which had been explored and taken up by P. F. Macdonald, of Yaamba, and sold to Wills, who had purchased sheep on the Darling Downs and Burnett (some of them from Sandeman) and travelled north with what was in those days a remarkably liberal equipment of teams, stores, &c. Wills, being a wealthy man and one of great pastoral experience, his advent to the new country was hailed as a great encouragement to others.

Sandeman, a good black boy, and myself made our start from Peak Downs with but three or four days' rations, hoping to make Richards' Station, near Springsure, in that time, which we should have done had it been all plain sailing. The scrubs of the various branches of the Nogoa made travelling very difficult, and we soon found that the fine country we had left behind was somewhat of an "oasis in the desert," and that 100 miles more or less of inferior and scrubby country separated the downs of Peak Range from those of Springsure.

At our second day's camp an occurrence took place that filled us with alarm. Our black boy, in coming to camp with the nags, was in a state of

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high excitement, and reported having met a flying mob of blacks loaded with new blankets, moleskin trousers and blue shirts; we knew thereby that some station must have been looted and possibly wild work done. We felt very gloomy, and our rations being short did not detract from the cheerlessness of the situation, there being nothing more depressing than travelling through scrub on an empty stomach. We were very glad on the fifth day from Peak Downs to come upon the tracks of bullocks and horses, which on being followed up led us to the welcome sight of a distant hut. Losing no time in unsaddling at the creek, we sent our boy up to the hut for supplies, and he came back with young Richards, whose appalling story more than confirmed the alarm we had felt a day or two before when the black boy had seen the blacks flying with their booty, which no doubt had formed part of the stores stolen from Wills.

Mr. Richards' story was a tragic one. He told us that less than a week ago Wills, together with his overseer and wife and child and nineteen station hands, had been massacred by the blacks, this slaughter having evidently been well concocted among the wretches, as the men were all struck down at a given time, when the various hands had come in and were resting from their avocations in the heat of the day after the noonday meal. The only man saved was an old stager shepherding the rams, who got into a tree on hearing the cries, and,

after witnessing the plundering of the stores and rations by an immense mob of blacks, had made tracks to the nearest station, which I think was Orion Downs, to warn Wills' neighbours. These were chiefly men of great energy and considerable experience, and numbered among them Messrs. Patten, Gregson, Thomson, Macintosh, Richards, and others, who soon made up a party to pursue the blacks. Richards gave a vivid description of the chase and of the combat that had taken place at dawn of day, which was, however, of so undecisive a character that it was not till the advent of Lieutenant Cave and the native police that the murderers of Wills and his party were pursued and thoroughly punished for their misdeeds.

The feeling in the outside country became deeply aroused by this terrible massacre, which no doubt acted as a warning to many not to trust or admit the blacks, a plan Sandeman and some of the other old pioneers had always advocated, but from which Wills had dissented. He had come north, he had said, to Queensland, after his long Victorian experiences, prepared to civilise and make use of the aborigines, and he had made friends with them from the first. They had got to know all about his habits and hours and the tempting nature of the supplies he had brought up, and had, for greed, deliberately planned and carried out this wholesale murder. Poor Wills paid the penalty of his kindness and over-confidence.

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I carried away this lesson of Wills' massacre with me, and vowed I never would have the blacks in on any station I managed, and I kept to this rule for over ten years, until the Peak Downs blacks became absolutely civilised, so that during my fifteen years there I never lost but one shepherd by them, and that by a neighbour's folly and not ours.

I may here mention that seventeen years after this murderous episode I visited Cullinaringo, as Messrs. Wills Brothers' station is called, to purchase sheep to stock country on the Barcoo. I found the sons of the murdered pioneer married and settled, pursuing peacefully their pastoral avocations and largely employing the blacks in station work, many of whom no doubt had had a hand in the massacre of 1861. Fortunately for themselves Mr. Wills' sons were at school when their father went north. The fine property he took up then is still in their hands, and, I understand, doing well.

We felt thoroughly downhearted, as we had proposed spending some time with Wills and resting our horses; we now thought it best to push on and get to Sandeman's other station, Burandowan, which I was to make the headquarters of my stock-recruiting for Peak Downs.

On our arrival at Burandowan I promptly took in hand the work of preparing a large mob of breeding sheep to stock Gordon Downs, and there the experience of my overland journey to Victoria in 1858 stood me in good stead. I went on to the Darling



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Downs for my equipment, and had then a good opportunity of marking the progress made on stations there since I left the district three years before.

High prices for sheep and wool were working wonders in the improvement of properties, which were all yielding substantial returns; these found their way largely into the pockets of the Government, as the lucky holders of Darling Downs stations had begun to put together, by securing themselves by their pre-emptive right against coming selection, the freehold estates that have been retained by some to this day. It is certain that at this time Darling Downs stations were coining money; young wethers for the Port Philip market were fetching 12s. to 14s. a head, and for northern settlement you could get for good ewes 15s. and for maiden ewes up to 20s. per head, whilst Merino wool kept up wonderfully, some well-washed Darling Downs clips going up to 2s. 6d. per pound.

Drayton and Toowoomba divided claims for the position of the capital of the Eastern Darling Downs, Dalby that of the Western portion, and Warwick was the chief township for the Southern part of this favoured district. These townships all wore an appearance of prosperity; the stores were always full, and the chief hotels were the rendezvous of squatters and their managers and overseers, discussing to late hours the varied movements of stock and stations. And certainly



these squatters of the Darling Downs in those good old times were a fine set of men; generally men of education and mostly of refinement, who had brought to that favoured portion of Queensland the habits and ways of gentlemen; so that if the Darling Downs did for many years, so to speak, rule Queensland and legislate possibly to somewhat selfish ends, this early legislative power might certainly have fallen into far less scrupulous and more dangerous hands. And certainly on the whole it was a matter of immense future import that not only was the character of Queensland's early settlers such as I have described it, but that when settlement followed westward and northward there were pioneers of the same stamp ready to undertake the development of those extensive territories.

The main point in providing a good start for the object I had in view was certainly to get the best material in men, stock, teams, and general equipment, and to that end Sandeman had provided the requisite means with his agents in Sydney during his absence in England; so I felt a free agent, entrusted with a great responsibility. Fortunately I had youth, energy, and experience. I had no difficulty in getting good men on the Darling Downs for my purpose. I had arranged to take up some fifteen thousand good breeding ewes, and one thousand ration wethers from Burandowan, also three good bullock teams, one horse team, and a fair

supply of hacks. To drive the lot, the party consisted of eight seasoned shepherds, three good bullock drivers, a horse driver, and a famous general knockabout man—Rody Hogan by name—also, of course, a cook. Following my main mob of sheep I took in charge of the rams Edmund Filmer Craven, an old friend of my principal's, who, after resigning a naval career that might have been brilliant, had made at his own request a fresh start, and that in the bush under my auspices. I am glad to say that, after many ups and downs, this scion of an old stock is serving Her Majesty as one of her police magistrates in Queensland with credit and success. I had no overseer or assistant at the start, but later on was joined by a very efficient amateur. It spoke well for my self-confidence in those days that I made my start for this new country without an assistant, but I had been enjoined to practise the strictest economy, and was eager to act up to my instructions.

The distance from Burandowan to Peak Downs I roughly computed at 350 miles, and my best road lay by Taroom, Palm Tree Creek, Gwambagyne, Banhinia Downs, and Springsure, up to which I would have the benefit of newly-stocked country. From Springsure to Peak Downs we were to make our own roads, and I anticipated some difficulty there in getting through the scrub. My Christmas was spent pleasantly enough at Burandowan before starting, Mr. Parry Okeden, Sandeman's manager,

a genial gentleman of the old school, doing all that lay in his power to assist and hasten the start of the expedition.

I was able to get away early in the year 1862, and soon found I had a trustworthy lot of men, and no incident worthy of note took place beyond a court case at Taroom with the bullock drivers, the only refractory men I had. This enabled me to make the acquaintance of the leading Justice of the Peace at Taroom—John Scott, afterwards member for the Leichardt and Chairman of Committees in the Legislative Assembly, who had formed a comfortable bush home at his station at Palm Tree Creek, where his musical and charming wife dispensed what was in those days a very rare degree of refined hospitality. I have described sheep droving in one of my early chapters, so its various incidents in this journey northwards need not be again referred to. In this trip I was driving a big lot in one mob, but then it was through country less heavily stocked than the southern areas. The sheep therefore got better feed and camped well.

At Gwambagyne, beyond Taroom on the Upper Dawson, Sandeman had asked me to look up his partner, Henry Gregory, a member of that well-known West Australian family who, inured to every form of Australian travel, had already made such a name in Australian exploration as recipients of the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society

for their expedition on the north-east coast of Queensland.

Henry Gregory was tough as whalebone, and used to ride from Gwambagyne to Burandowan, a two days' ride, it was said, with one pocket full of oatmeal and the other of sugar, and no other provision, disdaining, in that semi-tropical climate, blanket and ration bags. Single-handed, after the murder of the Frazer family, he pursued the blacks, tracking them up from camp to camp, "dispersing" them, and doing thereby as much to protect his neighbours as a whole detachment of police.

An account was given me by one who ought to know of Henry Gregory returning late from Taroom to Gwambagyne, on a broad moonlight night, not long before an attack was made on the station by a mob of blacks. He had barely fallen into a sound sleep when a spear was thrust through the slabs of his hut that went through his blanket, and narrowly missed him as he lay in his bunk. He started up, and, on his unbarring the door, found a large mob of blacks trying to force open the door of the store, which formed the next building in a line with his hut. He was said to have accounted for two of the aggressors by his first rifle shot, and then to have gone out and shot several others, thus liberating the cowardly hands that dared not come out of the store. It was also said that a new chum, lately out from England, had slept most soundly through the whole of this incident. Like all his brothers, Henry

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Gregory was a first-rate bushman. He used I noticed, in travelling, after a long day, to wash his horse as a first duty, where water permitted. I believe he is living in England, and should he read these lines he will know his share in the settlement of Queensland is not by some wholly forgotten.

At Banhinia Downs I met the interesting family of the Duttons, who showed us every attention. Of the two generations that had there conquered the wilderness several of the sons became successful squatters, and one of them, aspiring to political life, became for a time Minister of Lands. The Duttons had been connected with my friends the Bells, of Keepit on the Namoi, and I therefore felt as if I knew them; a more hospitable station to the northern traveller there could not be, and if they were friends of the whites they were no less such to the native blacks, who found in the Messrs. Dutton warm protectors from anything like cruelty or injustice.

About this time I was joined by young Fred Want, a son of Mr. R. Want, the eminent solicitor of Sydney, who had ridden up after me anxious to get on, and, if possible, obtain the rough experience of outside settlement on Peak Downs. Being full of life and energy and of good temper, fond of horses, and a good horseman, and as by this time I badly wanted an assistant, I was glad, with the scrubs of the Nogoia before me, to take him on, and until he left me some twelve months or so later he was of essential service on the station. He was unfortunate

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with fever and ague, to which he used to fall a special victim; there was no better companion, and he was never dull.

As anticipated, we had some ugly days in getting stock and teams across the Nogoa River and the brigalow scrubs that lined its banks, much of which we had to cut through. We were singularly fortunate in not losing sheep and in having no sickness amongst the men, or mishap of any kind, arriving about the middle of March, 1862, at the camp on Belcombe Creek Peak Downs, where my brother and his few hands had made all the progress they could with a lot of sheep station yards. The sheep were counted, and the total losses amongst them amounted for the journey to only forty two, a result quite extraordinary on such a big lot for so long a trip. I attributed the health and condition of the sheep to the fact that they came from a comparatively poor country to a virgin country full of saline grasses and herbage, which led them to improve every day as they moved northwards. Certainly a correspondingly long journey with so small a loss was a result I have never heard of since.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LIFE ON PEAK DOWNS.

THOUGH much drier than the previous October, when we had left Peak Downs for the Burnett, we found plenty, indeed too much, grass at the former, and were much afraid of bush fires. It was evident the carrying capacity of the country would be great, as we were able to run a large number of sheep within a short distance of our camp.

The cool season was beautiful, though heavy dews were an augury of a dry time ahead. These dews had the effect of bringing on fever and ague among some, and I very soon had a bad touch of it. Having secured the services of a smart man as working sheep overseer, by name Macalister, we soon had things in trim and working satisfactorily, the first teams from Rockhampton finding their way through the scrubs of the Mackenzie in good time to relieve our wants. This track to port established we could breathe more freely, as carriers are great at following a leader, and I did not despair of getting plenty of teams on that road after the first had pulled



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through. Being anxious to explore the route, with a view to shorten it, I was able to do so to my satisfaction after shearing.

There was, of course, much to do and look after on a newly-formed station with an early shearing in view and a lambing to follow. There were huts to build, yards to make, and a head station and store to put under way, roads to make, and rations and shearing supplies to procure from port.

Contracts had to be drawn out for the required buildings, timber had to be found and the carriage to be organised to bring in the stuff, whilst the contractors had to be watched, for bush contractors have a way of evading the strict letter of their agreement. The post that should be put two feet into the ground is often only put in eighteen inches, and that makes a wonderful difference in the stability of fences. It may be the corner post of your hut that is sawn off a foot instead of being sunk the proper depth in the ground, to the eventual detriment of the building, which gets a slew in the first wet season, with the consequence that out drop the wall plates, and the slabs soon follow. A manager should never depute to an overseer the fixing of sites or the supervision of improvements, whether they be dwellings, fences, yards, dams or wells. I took great pride, I recollect, in deciding on the sites of all my improvements, avoiding slovenly work and badly joined ties and wall plates, and in running my fencing lines rectangular, so as to please the eye.

Bad "improvements" form a continual eyesore, and tell more than is generally imagined against the sale of a property.

Of course there is a medium in all things. The era of the fifties and sixties when a hut and bough-yards placed at the back of a water-hole were sufficient for a couple of flocks of sheep, two shepherds and a hut keeper, has been followed by that of the seventies to the present time, when a profusion of paddocks of small area are deemed necessary for your flocks, when your boundary rider requires a paddock for his horses and a smart verandah cottage for his dwelling, not to speak of elaborate wool-sheds that cost a small fortune. Wells and tanks or circular dams, and latterly artesian wells, representing large sums, have opened up the back country, which, previously unwatered, has in most instances been found the richest and closest in pasture. Such large concerns as Saltern and Wellshot are instances of perfectly unwatered country being made, by lavish expenditure, to carry immense bodies of sheep. Natural water has now, so to speak, little to do with the disposition of the stock on one of these big Western Queensland runs.

We had been fortunate in getting from the Government pretty early in the day the great protection of a detachment of native police, the lieutenant of which, Genitas by name, was supposed to be a connection of the accomplished and excellent wife of our first Governor, Sir George Bowen, and

like her hailed from those "Isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung." Genitas was an excellent fellow and pleasant companion. We had also a good neighbour at Capella in "Sydney Beavan Davis," a quondam hard rider of the Cotswold and V.W.H. packs, who had arrived some time before us, with fine sheep and first-class equipment, to take up Peak Vale, a tract of country at the extreme west of Peak Downs, for Alfred Sandeman, then of Felton Darling Downs. This country Davis had found on inspection to be mere forest country with plenty of spear grass and its fatal seeds, and anything but the first-class sheep country it had been described to him and sold for; so Davis had borrowed from us some good sheep country on Capella Creek, about twelve miles from Gordon Downs, where he ran his sheep and went through his first shearing and lambing. It was a sad pity that Davis, from want of experience in that line of life, instead of at once giving up the idea of forming a sheep station on such inferior country, should have persevered in stocking Peak Vale with sheep to the eventual loss of his principal, whom no less than himself it largely helped to bring down. It was so much capital and work thrown away, for the country was only fit for cattle, which it carries to this day. Poor Davis! Many a camp-fire yarn we had in those days, when he would recount the splendid runs he had witnessed in the old country, when he made Cheltenham his headquarters, and would describe in glowing terms the

then opening glories of Bob Chapman's incomparable horsemanship.

It was fortunate that labour and carriage became much more readily obtainable on Peak Downs than was at first anticipated, owing to the fact that, in the winter season of 1862, a good deal of gold had been found near Hood's Lagoon, the present site of the township of Clermont. Gold had also been found some few miles out at Hurley's Rush, as well as at the springs on the south-west end of the Wolfgang run, the latter being in pretty deep leads. These gold discoveries, though never warranting a big rush, nevertheless brought a good sprinkling of diggers; and when about the same time Manton had discovered a big outcrop of copper ore, some three miles west of Hood's Lagoon, the joint fame of these mineral discoveries brought traffic and labour. This copper outcrop, when secured, was sold to a Sydney Syndicate and became the once famous Peak Downs Copper Mine, which was destined to largely influence the progress of the district; as big supplies of machinery and other requirements at once opened the road I had marked from Vicary's to Gordon Downs, and thence to the present site of Clermont, which thus early began to assume the importance of a township.

The Government had not been slow to recognise the settlement of a district that bore to Rockhampton a good deal of the importance that the Darling

Downs had created as regards Brisbane, for they had at the beginning of 1862 sent up to Peak Downs as District Surveyor Mr. Charles Gregory, one of the brothers of the Surveyor-General, and thus early in the field he had marked the site of three township reserves on Peak Downs; the first on the big water hole on Crinum Creek called Lilyvale, the second at Capella Creek, and the third at Hood's Lagoon, afterwards called Clermont. During his stay on Peak Downs I had many a camp with Gregory and had access to the valuable charts he was making of the district. Like all his brothers, he was a rare good bushman, and, being full of varied information, I was glad to see as much of him as I could. He was not a strong man, and I was sorry to hear he got delicate later on and, like those "whom the Gods love," died young.

I made several expeditions with him, one of the most interesting being that of the ascent of Royer's Peak, which, with its twin peak adjoining, viz., Scott's Peak, over 1,000 feet high, divide respectively the honours of being the highest of the range. The ascent was made difficult in that Gregory took his theodolite with him, which enabled him from the summit of Roper's Peak to fix the exact locality of the several landmarks of the district he was surveying. The view was certainly magnificent; below us lay stretched as a variegated carpet the then beautiful plains of

Peak Downs which filled in the prospect towards the south, where the horizon was bounded by the ranges of the Nogoia and the dark masses of scrub between them and the Peak Downs. To the west lay the Drummond Range; then came the serrated teeth, so to speak, of the Peak Range, which we could all identify from Leichardt's book and Archer's chart, Scott and Roper's Peaks forming the highest as well as the most eastern extremity of the range, the next in succession westwards being respectively "Brown and Charlie's" Peak, "Murphy's" Peak, a volcanic cone, then the flat-topped Table Mountain, then Mount Donald, after which "Fletcher's Awl," and last of all the isolated Wolfgang. Certainly a singular range, not more than 25 miles in length, but from which the watersheds, radiating like a spider's web and increasing in width as they ran south embraced, at a distance of 20 to 30 miles from the range, a width of downs country quite 70 miles in extent. Of the many grasses that clothed this rich country the barley grass was the chief, and in a good season that grass would give the country the appearance of a well cultivated field; the hardier and coarser star grass had not then become so prevalent.

Of animals we had the kangaroo, of which there was a goodly number, but they had not overwhelmed the district as they did in 1875-76-77, after the extermination of the wild dog. On the ranges the Wallaroo, a black and stumpier kangaroo, held



his lair. In the way of game we had in the creeks the black duck and the wood duck, both excellent eating, and on the plains the bronze-wing and squatter pigeon abounded, whilst the wild bustard afforded us an ever abundant change of diet, as they were more numerous than I ever saw them elsewhere; I have counted no less than seventy in a flock on burnt feed, and I have known them weigh up to eighteen pounds. We had also occasional visits from the flock pigeon, a species bigger than the squatter pigeon but smaller than the bronze-wing; this pigeon travelled in enormous flocks, evidently birds of passage; a good shot in the "brown" of them could bring down as many as twenty or thirty. They made splendid pies. I think this bird has now moved further west, where I have seen them in flocks so numerous as to make their visits almost a devouring scourge to the seeding grass.

At this time I felt keenly the responsibility of holding such an extent of country with what was only a handful of stock; for although my lambings were good and some more sheep had been sent up from the Burnett, I felt I had not stock enough for the stretch of country which I had in my charge. I distributed my sheep, however, to the best advantage I could. I had formed an out-station at Crinum Downs, ten miles east of Gordon Downs, which remained my centre; then I formed an overseer's camp and out-station at Scott's and



Roper's Peaks, where I had found a spring, calling the latter "Malvern"; that camp under the range was twenty miles from the head station. I also had sheep at Capella Creek, twelve miles westward, and another camp at Retro eight miles beyond, and had sent sheep to Wolfgang, which was fifty miles from Gordon Downs, to hold that as a separate property. This distribution of my stock naturally enjoined continual inspection, and at this time I almost lived in the saddle. The season and the climate were dry, grass plentiful, and my horses were the best I could secure. Indeed I look back with fond memory to the ease and courage with which some of my old nags would carry me fifty to sixty miles without fatigue in the heavy soil of that virgin country; there were one or two the like of which I shall never see again. I was fortunate with my men, and thanks to that and to keeping the blacks at arm's length, avoided many of the accidents and losses ordinarily incidental to the opening up of new country, especially when on so large a scale.

I will here briefly narrate the circumstances that attended the loss of the only shepherd I had killed by the blacks during my occupation of Peak Downs.

The only country I held on the other or north-east side of Peak Range was a block, "Cheeseborough," which took in the head of the Logan Downs Creek. In tendering for it, at Sandeman's request, I had named it after Cheeseborough Mac-

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donald, the gallant owner of Logan Downs, who was Sandeman's nearest and best neighbour on the Burnett. This block I occupied in 1863 with a flock of mixed wethers and weaners in charge of one of my best shepherds, Hamel by name: and to look after him in his somewhat isolated position I had sent a young Frenchman, Castres by name, who acted as hut-keeper and overseer, riding round every day to see Hamel and his flock on the plains that formed the best part of this little "run."

The then manager of the Peak Downs station, which lay as the crow flies only about a dozen miles from Cheeseborough, contrary to most of his neighbours, harboured and employed a large mob of wild blacks; and shortly before the event I now recall these blacks had been fired at in a scrimmage that had occurred between them and the men in charge of a mob of travelling sheep. In this scrimmage one of the Peak Downs blacks had been shot, upon which the camp had suddenly broken up, and in revenge the blacks marauded Thorne's Cotherstone station and killed a couple of his shepherds. Thorne sent at once for the native police from Capella Creek, and no time was lost in following up the main mob of these rascals. But in the meantime, after murdering Thorne's shepherds, the blacks went on to Cheeseborough and came across poor Hamel and his flock, and, after hacking him about a good deal, battered in his head and took his sheep away. Castres himself had a narrow escape; for when on

his daily round he found that the tracks of Hamel's flock lay in a bunch as if the sheep were being driven, he came on to the mob of blacks driving the flock to the scrub that lay at the head of the plains. Castres' horse was struck on the nose by a boomerang, the nag reared, Castres fell over, but most fortunately, however, kept hold of his bridle, managing to scramble on, and finding himself without fire-arms he galloped to the nearest station, Logan Downs, to give the alarm. Meantime the blacks cut off from the flock the fattest of the wethers, for which they made a yard at the edge of the scrub, and prepared for a great feast at our expense. However they reckoned without their hosts.

The native police were soon hard on their tracks, and actually, so the sergeant told me after, viewed, from the top of a ridge dominating the camp the blacks had chosen, a lot of young blacks of various ages riding the fat wethers round the yard, raising a cloud of red dust. The police waited till sundown for their attack, which did not result in the expected slaughter, owing to the dense scrub and small attacking force.

When word of Hamel's loss was sent me to Gordon Downs, and I rode over and inspected the scene, it was a curious one. The wide-spread blacks' camp stretched over an extent of nearly half a mile; fires smouldering and strings of fat decorating the scrub, with bark platters of half-

roasted mutton at every family fire. A couple of big blacks, shot in the act of running, and partly supported by the dense scrub, gave ghastly evidence of the disturbed feast, the preparations for which had been on a large scale.

This loss of one of my best shepherds was the only one I experienced during my long stay on Peak Downs, and it was traceable entirely to an inexperienced manager letting in wild blacks in large numbers on a station where they were bound soon to learn the best points of attack.

For the next two years I pushed ahead the formation of these out-stations on behalf of Sandeman, with a view to their disposal as separate stations, as I could see that a demand for properties in so tempting a portion of Northern Queensland was surely approaching, and when the time came I succeeded in disposing of the bulk of Mr. Sandeman's property, together with sheep enumerated as follows:—To Messrs. Travers and Gibson through the active partner, Mr. Roderick Travers, the Malvern Downs station, which consisted of the heads of Balcombe Creek in and around Scott's and Roper's Peaks; this was sold with 17,500 sheep for £22,500, and the purchasers seemed very gratified with their bargain. Later on I sold to Mr. Brown, a friend of Mr. Travers, a block of country under Table Mountain called "Huntly," with 10,000 sheep for £14,000. That country was well watered with springs, and very picturesque as well as rich. Then

followed the sale of Crinum Creek, from its head to Lilyvale township, to Messrs. Hope and Ramsay, of the Darling Downs, with 16,000 sheep for £20,000; after which Mr. Travers' elder brother, Mr. S. Smith Travers, was tempted to purchase from Sandeman the head station I had formed, "Gordon Downs," consisting of the bulk of the country on Belcombe and Gordonstone Creeks, together with 35,000 sheep and such improvements as I had made, for £45,000. This left in Sandeman's hands only the country on Capella and Retro Creeks, which was afterwards disposed of to a Victorian firm. Thus, owing to the hard exigencies of the position with regard to Sandeman's southern properties, this fine tract of country was cut up and disposed of, leaving me only the development of the Wolfgang Downs property, in which I had a considerable share, to attend to, and to this I applied myself with vigour after the sales I have just enumerated had taken place.

These fairly successful transactions enabled me to acquire a great insight into the business part of squatting. The calculations entered into by the purchasers were evidently based on the high prices then existing for wool and sheep, and few had foreseen the sharp and severe financial crisis that was to overtake Queensland, the sequel of the crash that shook the city of London in 1866. In 1867, and from that to 1872, when confidence was restored and high prices for station property were to rule again,

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we all had to fight with a severe depression and a dearth of money that entailed great sacrifices. It was fortunate for their owner that these sales of Peak Downs properties had taken place before this crisis came to pass.

In the meantime the attention of Victorian capitalists was being directed to Queensland, as had previously been the case after the first introduction of Wills' ill-fated settlement on the plains of the Nogoia. It may be said to have commenced on a larger scale on the Peak Downs station by the Messrs. Fairbairn, to be soon afterwards extended to the wider pastures of the Mitchell and Gregory, where at this date Victorian investments represent millions of money.

The latter end of 1863 and commencement of 1864 quite set up all the sources of Peak Downs springs for some years; the rainfall was abnormal and enormous, and the tributaries of the Fitzroy poured into it supplies that rendered the country between Peak Downs and Rockhampton wholly impassable for teams. It was then that the shorter road from Broad Sound to Clermont was initiated, and the country it passed through was certainly less flooded. Rockhampton was surrounded with water, steamers were moored in mid-stream, and I well recollect being weather-bound for a month in that city of mosquitoes, which nearly drove me crazy. This rainy season, and a couple of fair ones that followed it, were of immense help to the develop-



ment of Northern and Western Queensland, 1868 being the next dry season: 1865 saw Clermont a rising township with a Police Magistrate, Gold Commissioner, and Court of Petty Sessions, and the copper mines fairly started, with a capital of £100,000 obtained in Sydney. These works were erected at "Copperfield," distant three miles from Clermont; and, what with the gold found at small rushes near Clermont and the furnaces at work at Copperfield, these twin townships became great factors in the settlement and civilisation of that part of Queensland. To the squatters commencing operations in and around Peak Downs these townships meant labour for their stations and carriage for their wool; and some of the brawny Cornishmen imported to the copper mine were not above sinking some of my best wells at Wolfgang. That copper mine promised well, and indeed did famously for a time. Banks and kindred institutions sprang up, and coach communication by the universal and invincible Cobb and Co. became so complete an organization as to be of great value to travellers.

Amongst the many notable friends and men of action I met for the first time about this date was William Kilgour, of Surbiton, who afterwards took up the management of Gordon Downs for Mr. Travers, soon after he had purchased it from Sandeman. Keen, hardy, and resolute, Kilgour soon became a leading spirit on the Peak Downs, and,



devoting himself to wool growing, managed to get wonderful prices for the Gordon Downs wool in those cheery years of good prices, 1873-74-75. Gordon Downs then offered a charming home, graced by the presence and infinite hospitality of Mrs. Kilgour, the sister of the gifted Jean Ingelow. Kilgour is now managing one of the largest financial and pastoral mortgage companies in Sydney.

It is well to record here that our first bank manager on Peak Downs was the popular Tom Hall, who opened the first branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank in Clermont. After a career of steady work, I am glad to say Dame Fortune put in his way one of her very best chances, of which he readily availed himself. He is now one of the chief owners of the celebrated Mount Morgan mine. He was always known in the olden days as a model bank manager, discreet and cautious, but still obliging.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SOME LAWLESS DEEDS IN EARLY DAYS, QUEENSLAND.

THE growth of our District and the mention of Country Banks recalls an event which convulsed our settlement and became the talk of Queensland, namely, the murder, at Bedford's public house at the Mackenzie crossing, between Rockhampton and Peak Downs, of the sergeant and trooper of the escort while travelling from Rockhampton to Clermont with funds for the Australian Joint Stock Bank.

In giving a brief account of this sensational episode it is well to retrace one's steps a bit to the period antecedent to the event, when the Brisbane Government of the day had sent up to Clermont as its first Police Magistrate, Gold Commissioner, Inspector of Police and Commissioner of Crown Lands, John Thomas Griffin, a smart Irishman who had served in the Land Transport Corps in the Crimea. Griffin's only credentials for these concurrent appointments were his having served twelve months in Brisbane as Acting Clerk of Petty Sessions, where he had readily mastered the routine of the police court work. Clermont was developing rapidly

at the time ; the Bench work had become too great a tax on my fellow-magistrates and myself, and the goldfields round Clermont required attention from a revenue point of view, so an energetic, active man was undoubtedly required to represent the Government.

Griffin certainly possessed plenty of energy, and was full of pushing qualifications ; indeed, soon after his arrival he arrogated to himself a good deal more than even the full powers of his various appointments ; he had the assistance of Mr. Cave, a plodding but timid officer, as Clerk of Petty Sessions, who could do but little to check Griffin's overbearing self-will. After a time Griffin had become engaged to a young lady in Rockhampton, and his frequent absences to that town threw a good deal of work and responsibility on the local Bench. In fact, it was not long before the condition of affairs became such that I took upon myself as Senior Magistrate to request that an inquiry should be made in Brisbane into the conduct of our Police Magistrate, making certain distinct charges, too long to enumerate, but which I could have proved had not my witnesses, owing to sickness and other causes, been prevented from attending the inquiry at Brisbane, which took place under the presidency of a leading under-secretary of the Civil Service. Griffin was acquitted of blame owing to want of evidence ; had fate ruled it otherwise, both crime and mischief would have been prevented.

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Griffin, after this exoneration, acted more independently than ever ; his absences at Rockhampton became more and more frequent, and it was said he was getting into debt. He gave out that he had received word from New South Wales that bush-rangers would probably stick up the escort which, every month or so, as soon as the quantity became sufficiently large, was sent down to Rockhampton from Clermont with the gold purchased by the local bank, the escort returning to Clermont with notes and bullion for the service of the same bank. Griffin had evidently made up his mind to take a desperate step. He gave out, contrary to all usage, that he would accompany the next escort to town, alleging the possibility of its being stuck up as a reason for his trip. It thereafter became evident that he was checkmated from the first by the decision and firmness of Sergeant Julian, who was in charge, and who refused to camp at the Mackenzie Crossing, on the way down, at the scrubby spot Griffin had indicated. No doubt Griffin was balked on this occasion, or his nerve failed him, in getting possession of the untraceable gold, which was, on arrival, safely delivered to the Bank in Rockhampton.

On the start of the return escort Griffin accompanied it to its first camp at a lagoon a few miles out of Rockhampton, near which resided the lady to whom he was paying his addresses, and there an occurrence took place that threw a light on his

criminal intentions. He remained in camp to boil the tea whilst the escort men, including Julian, the sergeant in charge, were out with the horses, and when he (Julian) returned and tasted the tea Griffin had made in his absence, he at once spat it out, and emptied the billy. There could be no doubt Griffin had poisoned it with strychnine. Julian, however, very wrongly as it turned out, kept this to himself, and, refusing to go any further with the escort, resigned his charge. Had he communicated his suspicions to the other two men, and thus put them on their guard, they might have been saved, but Julian was afraid of Griffin. On Julian resigning his post the escort was brought back, and the other men started with it again, Griffin accompanying them, this time on the plea that they were short-handed. When they reached the Mackenzie River Crossing the camp was fixed at the scrubby spot indicated by Griffin, about half a mile from Bedford's public-house, where Griffin had left his horse in order to start back to Rockhampton with the publican, Bedford, who was also starting to Rockhampton early next morning.

During the night Bedford heard two shots, one about midnight, the other about two hours later. Griffin made his appearance at Bedford's at daylight, carrying a valise in his hand, and looking, as Bedford said in his evidence, very pale and disturbed. On Bedford remarking upon the firing he had heard, Griffin said he had fired his pistols to scare any

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bushrangers there might have been about, as this was the only camp he was afraid of for them, but that having left his escort men all right, he could now return to Rockhampton easy in his mind. Griffin and Bedford rode to town very quickly, Bedford remarking upon the nervousness of his mate, who several times lagged behind him, and subsequently, as they neared Rockhampton, turned off towards the settlement where his *fiancée* lived.

A few days had barely passed before Rockhampton was startled by the news brought by the mailman that the two escort troopers had been found dead at the Mackenzie by a man searching for his bullocks, and that their camp had to all appearance been robbed, the saddlery and so forth being scattered about. The report, moreover, stated the men to have been poisoned, as some pigs, that had apparently eaten of the matter thrown up by the men, lay dead near the place. Griffin, who was still in Rockhampton, showed himself both distressed and surprised, and was, of course, one of the first to instigate an inquiry, for the purpose of which a party consisting of the Sub-Inspector of police, Elliott, the Bank Manager, Tom Hall, the Medical Inspector, Dr. Salmond, and a black tracker, together with Griffin, made ready to start for the scene of the outrage.

On the journey up to the Mackenzie Crossing Griffin showed so much nervousness that on nearing the scene of the murder, after the party had arrived

at Bedford's and refreshed themselves, it did not astonish Elliott, who had his ideas pretty well made up on the subject, when Griffin exclaimed, "My God! I cannot face this," upon which Elliott at once arrested him, and put him in handcuffs. On examination of the victims by Dr. Salmond, the bodies were found to be, of course, in an extreme state of decomposition; but the heads had a shot through each of them, proving thereby that on the troopers showing signs of recovery after sickness from their overdose of poison, Griffin had deliberately shot them. The black tracker had no difficulty in fitting the tracks found round the scene with the boots worn by Griffin, who had a particularly small foot. The circumstantial evidence on which Griffin was solely convicted was extremely well put together, and much credit was reflected thereby upon Sub-Inspector Elliott.

About this time Griffin had been found to have made away with some of the police pay, and also to have defrauded some Chinamen of a parcel of gold, for which he had given them a worthless escort receipt. After a long and sensational trial, which was the talk of the day in Queensland, Griffin was convicted and duly hanged. He refused to confess, but gave a warder such information as enabled him to claim the reward for the valise full of bank-notes, found soon after in a hollow log near the Lagoon Camp, a few miles out of Rockhampton.

It turned out that Griffin was a married man



whose wife was in Victoria ; he had thus been living a double life. No doubt he was, up to a certain point, a clever scoundrel, after which he seems to have completely lost his head. I recollect having been taxed by some mutual friends with much undue animus against him, but I never wavered in my estimate of the man after I had found out certain reckless and arbitrary ways of his in connection with the office work. It was hereafter always a marvel to me how Griffin could have left so good a record in Brisbane as to have pointed him out to the Colonial Secretary as a fit man for the charge of our Peak Downs district. He certainly was very plausible, had a winning manner and a good deal of Irish wit ; moreover he was tall, symmetrical in build, and extraordinarily active, for I have known him to follow his kangaroo dogs on foot, hunting wallaby and kangaroo round Clermont. Though he was young then, about thirty-five to forty, we could see he had led a hard life, and he made no pretence to the refinements of a gentleman.

There was some posthumous romance attached to Griffin's crime, as the lady he was engaged to married well and lived happily after ; the same may be said of the *fiancée* of the murdered escort leader, who, after a time of mourning, became the wife of a distinguished Queensland parliamentarian and Minister of the Crown. In those rising days of Central Queensland good wives were scarce, and it is pleasant to reflect that a crime like

the one I have described swept by, leaving but a transient record of disaster.

After an interval, the Peak Downs district was entrusted to the care of a very different officer, who was appointed to all the offices that had been held by Griffin, viz., Captain F. Henry Lambert, who had been senior captain in the 19th Regiment, a brave soldier in whose pleasant society my friends and I passed many an evening. When, at Wolfgang, we saw him approaching on the plain, followed by Brown, his orderly, and a mob of kangaroo dogs, we always hailed his advent with pleasure. He was full of wit and anecdote, and though he had led a somewhat stormy life, he was apparently content to become Police Magistrate of Clermont, where he died respected by the whole district—a great contrast between his career and that of his predecessor.

During this period the Peak Downs copper smelting works made rapid advances, and presented a formidable appearance with dozens of furnaces, stacks of chimneys, and rows of huts for the miners, who were in most cases Cornishmen imported from England. William Woodhouse, brother of a former general manager of the Bank of New South Wales, was the superintendent, and he was ably assisted by Captain Dennis as mining captain, and Christoe as smelter. I was always glad to vary my pastoral experiences by a visit to my friend Woodhouse, who would take me underground to view the resources of his copper mine, from which some wonderful speci-

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mens of malachite were from time to time obtained. The mine is now exhausted, I am sorry to say, and the furnace fires are quiescent.

In those Peak Downs days I write of the traffic from Clermont and Copperfield, together with that of the growing pastoral district, travelled by a road different to that adopted after that expensive railway was started from Rockhampton to Westwood. The road from Rockhampton to Peak Downs then went to Yaamba, where in those days my good friend, P. F. Macdonald, who had pioneered the Nogoia and Springsure country, resided, and a good many pleasant evenings did I owe to my hospitable entertainer when travelling that road. From Yaamba the road went *via* Princhester to Marlborough, where the Broad Sound road turned off, thence to Apis Creek, past the lower crossings of the Mackenzie to Columba, where dwelt then my good old friend A. K. Callan. From Columba one had to travel through much scrub to the upper crossing of the Mackenzie, where the Griffin tragedy took place, the last stage of the forest country before emerging on the open plains of Peak Downs being Vicary's Station, where Mr. Vicary, the respected owner of Canoona, had formed a station.

The first aspect of the Peak Downs plains after the timbered country one rode through from Vicary's was rendered striking by an array of bottle trees that stood here like sentinels of the road, in appearance like so many gigantic soda water bottles.

Under these curious trees we used to pull up in old days and have many an impromptu luncheon, after gladdening our eyes on the vista of open downs stretching for miles towards Scott and Roper's Peaks, which became here visible for the first time, and were not unlike the Egyptian pyramids.

In these days no end of "shanties" lined this Rockhampton road, especially during its high traffic, and there the weary traveller or teamster could obtain an unlicensed glass of grog. These "shanties" were, of course, exceedingly rough; we therefore hailed as a great boon the erection of any decent accommodation house on that townless road. *Apropos* of this, I must relate a circumstance in connection with the Peak Downs road that greatly affected me, and is clearly imprinted on my memory.

One day, returning from one of the many trips I had to make to Rockhampton on station business, I first met, near Apis Creek, the man who then called himself James Christie; he was riding a very fine brown horse, and was crossing the road before me, making towards a camp that had a tent with a lot of timber stacked about it. As the man was a stranger I caught him up and entered into conversation with him, and he proved, though shy, affable and fairly communicative, asking me to get off my horse and have a cup of tea with his "old woman," who turned out to be a pretty little person, though silent and demure. Having asked him if he would sell the brown horse, he referred me to his wife as the

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owner, when she at once said nothing would induce her to sell him. I little knew then the "romance of the road" that was attached to that gallant brown horse. Christie then told me he had come overland from Victoria, and that in company with a good mate, who was then out splitting stuff, he intended to put up a public-house where we were, as he thought it a good stand, with which I quite agreed. I gave him every encouragement, and promised him he would get his license if the house was a good one. I made up my mind to stop there on my next trip down from Peak Downs (in Australia, especially Queensland, it is *down* to town, and not *up*), which I did, camping there some time after with some fellow-travellers and many horses for two nights, when we were well taken care of by Christie and his partner, whom we found very decent fellows, the accommodation being superior to anything on that road, as the respective wives of Christie and his partner thoroughly understood how to make travellers comfortable. On another occasion when camping there, I remember giving into Christie's charge for the night a saddle-bag with a considerable sum in cheques and notes that I was about to pay into the Rockhampton Bank, which he kept quite safe for me.

Within twelve months or so, however, of this start of Christie's at Apis Creek, the news arrived on Peak Downs that his house had been visited by a large body of native police from Rockhampton, and that

Christie had been arrested as Frank Gardiner, the renowned New South Wales bushranger, whose disappearance some time before (on his gang being at last broken up by the N.S.W. Police) had occasioned a nine days' wonder. He was supposed to have shipped himself off to South America; Gardiner, instead, had lain planted in some of his old mountain haunts (so well described in "Robbery Under Arms"), and on the attraction afforded by the gold discovery in the vicinity of Clermont, had started for those diggings overland with a cart, bringing with him Mrs. Brown, a pretty woman, who had linked her fate with his, and taking with him also the fine brown horse, which was a stolen animal, and who could jump anything and travel any journey.

Amongst the many travellers from Peak Downs who had about this time passed Christie's was one Jacobsohn by name, a storekeeper at Copperfield, where he held interests; this man at once recognised Christie as the bushranger Gardiner, who had stuck him up and robbed him on one of the goldfields in New South Wales. Jacobsohn held his tongue and went to Sydney, where he found that the £1,000 reward for Gardiner's capture still held good; he then returned to Brisbane, where the Commissioner of Police made prompt and complete arrangements to have Gardiner seized by the Rockhampton police, an arrest that was effected without the slightest resistance on the part of Gardiner or his mate. As to the mate, there was nothing against him, and



it was a moot question whether in his heart of hearts he ever knew that James Christie was the renowned Frank Gardiner.

This capture created intense astonishment in the colonial world, for Gardiner had, no doubt, been held somewhat as a *preux chevalier* among bush-rangers, and certainly was the leader of a gang that had for a long time defied every effort of the N.S.W. police. It was said, however, that he had never shown cruelty in his doings like some of his bloody successors; but there could be no doubt that he deserved capital punishment as the originator and organiser of the bushranging of that day.

Proceeding to Sydney shortly after this event, I was asked by the authorities, as a matter of form, to identify him as the Christie I had known on the Peak Downs road. I must say I could not but pity him as I saw him in the iron-railed yard of the jail, so shrunk and grey and aged, a very different man from the one I had first seen riding the fiery brown horse, with easy seat and consummate horsemanship, under the free blue sky of the Queensland refuge he had endeavoured to retire to. Verily his sins had found him out.

Christie, I remember, shook my hand when my interview was over, and said, "Well, Mr. de Satgé, you can testify that I tried to live a respectable life on the Peak Downs road," and that he certainly had; and I believe it was greatly owing to that



extenuating fact that his sentence was not a capital one, but that of imprisonment for life, which was afterwards commuted to a release after nearly twenty years of hard labour, when Gardiner was shipped to California, where, it is understood, he died shortly after, shot in a gaming-house brawl. I did hear in Sydney about this time that there was a strong feeling amongst a certain class that Gardiner should not be condemned to death, and that had that been his sentence an attempt at rescue would have been made. I give this rumour, however, as I heard it, and for what it is worth.

Whilst on this subject of bushranging there was, I may mention, some attempt at this class of lawlessness in Northern Queensland about this time, but it met with a short-lived existence. A curious incident occurred in the case of two bushrangers, who were pursued towards the Mackenzie by two amateurs from Rockhampton, one of them being Mr. Paton, a merchant of Rockhampton, who on coming up with the outlaw, covered him with his revolver, commanding him to throw up his hands; in his nervousness, however, Paton's pistol went off, and shot the bushranger dead. Paton, I heard, was sorely troubled at this *contretemps*, and handed over to the Rockhampton hospital the reward he was entitled to for this capture. A noted case was the sticking up and foul murder of a respectable and well-known gold buyer on his return from the Crocodile Diggings to Rockhampton, near the banks

of the Fitzroy, between Yaamba and Rockhampton. In this case the murderers were two youths, natives of New South Wales, and respectably born, who expiated on the scaffold a crime that was, I understood, unpremeditated. These young men wore masks, and only wanted the gold, but on the victim recognising his assailants, and vowing that he would show them up, they shot him, and dragged his body to some neighbouring water, where it was found.

## CHAPTER XIII.

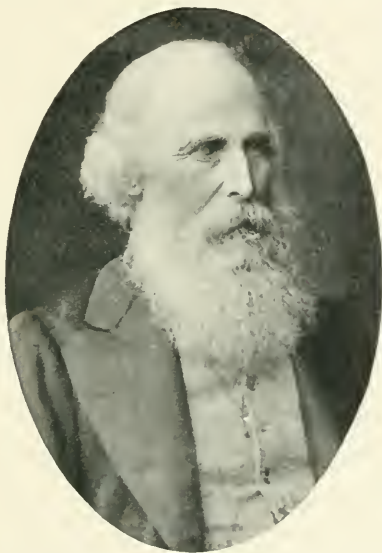
### TO THE SOUTH FOR A REST, AND BACK BY THE DOWNS.

AFTER the work and responsibilities entailed by the development and subsequent sales of station property on the Peak Downs, which I have described, I was glad to seek a change south, and first paid a visit to Sydney, stopping there with my partner, Mr. James Milson, who was anxious to discuss many matters of interest in connection with Wolfgang, which station was to absorb most of my energies for some years to come. Out of much property which he had possessed on the north shore, Mr. Milson had preserved to himself a delightful home in that locality, where, in a bit of primeval eucalyptus forest you could hear the locust sing in full strength, and fancy yourself a hundred miles from Sydney, had not an opening of deep blue sky through the tall gums revealed the distant heads of Port Jackson. Sweet spot, full of the attributes of peace and quiet, long may it retain its natural charms. There my rest was as complete as it was pleasant, and I felt a regret when business required me to face the crowded

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north shore steam ferry and be conveyed to Circular Quay, there to meet the busy throng of George Street.

After a good stay in Sydney, I returned to Queensland, stopping first at Brisbane, a capital which, previous to the crisis of 1866, seemed to



JAMES MILSON, ESQ., NORTH SHORE, SYDNEY.  
(Native born Australian.)

have been making the most of the stimulus given to the community by Parliamentary Government, which it had enjoyed since separation in 1859, under the auspices of its first Governor, Sir George Bowen. And here I may say of that Governor that it would have been difficult for the Colonial Office of the day to have provided for Queensland a more genial

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representative of Imperial interests. Sir George Bowen, whose classical career at the University had early fitted him for his work in the Ionian Islands, and afterwards for the Colonial Service, was then in the prime of life, good-looking, full of *bonhomie*, and gifted with remarkable conversational talents; these advantages, together with the talents of his beautiful and graceful spouse, lent much charm to the social gatherings they had instituted at the new Government House, which were amenities Brisbane had hitherto lacked.

In 1860 his first Parliament had met in the old convict barracks in Queen Street, and it was there, in the somewhat dim legislative chamber of that old building, that my ear first caught the sounds of the graceful and polished periods of Robert Herbert in answer to the harsher tones of Ratcliffe Pring. Over thirty years have passed since those days of Queensland's youth, and whilst the latter luminary has passed away, leaving kindly recollections of his legal life, the former is still vigorous and alert, and has only just closed, as Sir Robert Herbert, G.C.B., a long career of Colonial and Imperial usefulness amid the congratulations of his many friends.

Between the date of separation in 1859 and the financial crisis of 1866, it is hardly too much to say that our new Colony had been enjoying somewhat extravagantly the first and costly experiences of independence. A sumptuous Government House was, of course, an early requirement to replace

the temporary use the Governor had made of Dr. Hobbs' old house ; then came the erection of the palatial Parliament Houses, inclined, from their height and size, to elevate the minds of their occupants. Railways were undertaken, destined somewhat largely to enrich European contractors, whilst a fortunate sea captain found a good fortune in dredging the shoal waters of "Francis' Channel" ; furthermore, early loans at 6 to 10 per cent. remained for some time a proof of the sanguine hopes of the Treasurer of that day.

However, there was a good deal, I must say, in favour of such hopes ; gold had been discovered in many portions of the Colony ; other metals, furthermore, were found which pointed to possibly inexhaustible mineral resources ; and the treasures of the soil, whether by cultivation on the Darling Downs, sugar-growing at Mackay, or pastoral settlement in the Western Plains, seemed to promise boundless scope for a growing population. A great deal of real profit was being earned in the leading industry of the country at the time by those whose pastoral properties in Southern Queensland were within fair carriage of port ; there was a growing demand for breeding stock to go north and west, whilst other sheep required for mutton continued to command a good price for overland supply to the Victorian markets. Wool of no great quality, and sometimes indifferently washed, fetched two shillings a pound delivered at Ipswich, which black soil township

obtained considerable commercial activity in those days both as the terminus of the Brisbane river navigation and the starting point of our southern railway system to the Darling Downs.

These were also the palmy days of that excellent little haven of rest the Ipswich Club, where the jolly and prosperous Darling Downs squatters of that day used to foregather, and it was a lucky stroke for a baked-up northerner if he had managed to secure a room at the Ipswich Club for the gaieties attendant on the June meeting of the North Australian Jockey Club. He would be sure there to meet the cream of squatting Queensland, and amongst them often a noted *bonvivant* and sporting judge, also a still more sporting attorney-general, whose set-up appearance and well-groomed hack would have done credit to Newmarket.

"Fred" was the club caterer, and furnished remarkable dinners, notably pigeon pies, that fell generally to the Judge's gastronomic nod. Fellows rode down from Drayton to Ipswich, seventy miles, with little trouble in a day, for the hacks then were good and a change generally procurable at such hospitable stations on the road as Helidon, Gatton, or Grantham. Heavy weights like William O'Grady Haly on his chestnut, "Wellington," Arnold Wienholt on his weight-carrying brown "Bolivar," or William Kent on his "Cannon Ball" (men who would all have figured as "Paladins" in the days of the Crusades) were content to don silk and match





SIR ARTHUR HODGSON AND MR. ROBERT RAMSAY.



themselves and their favourites fifteen stone up for a three-mile race on the Limestone Racecourse, amidst the hearty cheers of their old chums and neighbours, and often also that of their shearers and employés down for a spree to the Ipswich races, whilst lighter weights, like Carden Collins, delighted the *cognoscenti* with admirable jockeyship.

There were even then some fine studs in Queensland, which was ceasing to depend upon the Clarence for her blood stock. The Bells and the Bigges, the Halys and Dr. Simpson, imported sires and formed studs the excellence of which can be traced to this day; gentlemen in those days raced more for the pleasure than the profit of the sport, chiefly riding themselves when they could. If they returned to their comfortable stations on the Darling Downs or elsewhere after the Ipswich meeting without any great winnings from their wagers they had at any rate interviewed their agents and found their station balances generally on the right side, for Queensland squatters had not yet arrived at the days of great scientific improvements, low returns and labour unions. Those who had sold out, like the Gammies and some others, had perhaps had the best of Moreton Bay; still the bulk remained, and they comprised such men as Arthur Hodgson of Eton Vale, Hope and Ramsay of Rosalie Plains, John Watts, Deuchar of Glengallan, the Douglasses of Talgai, Kent and the Wienholts of Maryvale, Fassifern and Jondaryan, Isaac of Gowrie, McLean

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and Beit of Westbrook, the Gores of Yandilla, Bells of Jimbour, and others I could recount, who left names, families and fortunes linked with the early history of Queensland that leave little to be desired in the way of reputation for industry, courage, honesty of purpose, and absolute good faith; their word being their bond, their agreements seldom written, their servants well used, their animals cared for, and their homesteads open to the most ungrudging hospitality, and what can a country desire more in the founders of her early history?

The younger school that have succeeded these, if things are not so rosy as they were, must only remember their predecessors and struggle on, trusting to Providence, fair seasons, and that turn of the wheel which is always going round in Colonial history from good to bad and bad to good times in almost certain rotation. They must not, above all, shirk their political or municipal duties, or allow any socialistic or other combination to do them out of their legislative rights, which can all be attended to coupled with their sheep farming; they should allow no tampering with the advantageous tenure of the land for all classes. It strikes me that if you can't make out of squatting in Australia the great returns of bygone days, you can still eke out of it a happy and intelligent lot, surrounded with comforts and a dash of intellectual pursuit unknown in our old days.

The panic of 1866, the influence of which was felt in Queensland for several years after, played the mischief with all pastoralists who were either largely in debt or whose credit was not good. Many good men and true went down then, and many a good property was bought for little by rising men who took their good fortune on the hop, several of these bargains leading to considerable fortunes. Large sacrifices continued to be made by sellers in the dull time between 1866 and 1872, notably in outside stations, such as those for instance of the Messrs. Ellis on the Barcoo, Burenda, and others I could name. The development of the Barcoo had been pushed out during this period by stock from the Darling Downs, a start being made also to the northern portion of that district from Clermont, *viâ* the Belyando, surrounding the Aramac country. In fact, reports came in before 1866 that neither the Darling Downs nor the Peak Downs, good as they might be thought to be, were a patch on the Barcoo; but its early settlers had to fight against long carriage and high wages, to say nothing of financial difficulties.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A TRIP TO THE PAROO IN THE FAR SOUTH-WEST.

AFTER the sale of Gordon Downs, I became more closely identified with the development of Wolfgang, which we were able to work profitably. We were anxious to keep our account at the bank as little overdrawn as possible, the charge for interest on overdrawn accounts being 10 per cent. ; so not finding a ready sale for our wethers on Peak Downs, we started a lot of 12,000 young wethers overland towards Riverina by the extreme western route, advising the Sydney agents to sell them, if possible, for delivery towards the Queensland border on the Lower Paroo.

Hearing such a sale was likely to be effected, with delivery within a fixed period wherever the sheep might be (they were then travelling down the Paroo, a river west of the Darling), I determined to start to Sydney, and thence to work out west and deliver them in person. The difficulty, however, was that from the coast to the Darling in New South Wales, 1868 had brought a real bad drought, and coach

travelling had been given up. However, I made up my mind to start west from Sydney with a light American buggy and a strong horse, and take with me as much feed as I could, trusting to eke it out with fodder procurable at stopping places. This I did, shipping from Sydney to Newcastle, and thence by rail to Muswellbrook, passing my old friend the township of Cassilis; from there to Coolah, crossing the Castlereagh, and by Coonabarabran to Walgett, where I expected to hear of the sheep.

Nothing could exceed the wretched state of the country; not a vestige of food was visible, and the only fodder available was either oaten hay, purchaseable at a very high figure, or reeds cut by the blacks down the banks of watercourses. Gaunt cattle seemed dying by inches, and starving horses stood at stock-yard gates like Mr. Micawber, "waiting for something to turn up." I certainly never saw a country look worse. A change was, however, at hand, for at my last stage before reaching Walgett rain came on, which obliged me to leave the buggy, as the wheels clogged in the black soil; so I had to ride into Walgett on horseback. There I was "bailed up" three days by heavy rains that soon changed the aspect of the country, and relieved from destruction most of the stock in that rich part of New South Wales.

I heard here that my wethers would be at a certain stage on the Paroo by the time fixed for



their delivery, and, as prices had been falling, was anxious not to miss being there on the appointed day. Taking the buggy further was out of the question, so I left it at Walgett, and, buying a pack horse, started down the Barwon to Bourke. Grass being still bare, and roads heavy and horses weak, I knocked up several horses, and had to buy fresh ones to keep to my time. At Bourke, which was even then a considerable and lively township, I met two leading men with whom hereafter I became well acquainted—Mr. Vincent Dowling, now one of the foremost sheep breeders of New South Wales, whose property, Yantabulla, lay on my road to the Paroo, and Cecil Guinness, a partner of Mr. W. Furlonge, of Bemery on the Darling, a station I had passed above Bourke. These good men put me in the way of getting fresh horses, and as I found I had only forty-eight hours left to get to the camp where I expected to meet the sheep, or about 140 miles to travel in that time, I felt keeping my appointment depended a good deal on my horses not knocking up. Fortunately they didn't, and I reached the camp of my travelling sheep on the day fixed in the sale note. My buyer, having taken another and badly watered route from Walgett, had killed a couple of horses thereby, at which he was very grumpy. He had arrived before me, and was hoping I would not put in an appearance, when he could have claimed to be let off his bargain. It wasn't a pleasant delivery,

and as he would take only a few of the horses with the travelling sheep, I determined I would take them all back to Wolfgang, picking up those I had recently bought and knocked up on my way down from Walgett.

This trip up the Warrego I felt would make me acquainted with the fine country up that river and between Bourke and Charleville, a distance of over 300 miles, traversing rich pastoral country, from which I intended to pay my first visit to the far-famed Barcoo. I settled with my drover, who had made an excellent trip considering the season, the worst of which he had avoided by keeping well west, and whilst he took coach to Sydney from Bourke, where I posted my receipt for the sheep, which meant cash for same on presentation, I took on the black boy and a new-chum Frenchman, who had acted as assistant, and who was companionable and pleasant.

I was glad to accept Guinness' invitation to rest my horses at his station, Bemery, previous to my long journey back, so at Bemery I spent a most charming three weeks, watching the grass grow and the country resuming its normal appearance after one of the worst droughts on record. Guinness was a very good companion, and amongst other accomplishments sang delightfully; we spent the days canoeing on the flooded Darling and shooting ducks in the anabranches, or breaking in the bulk of our horses to draw the buggy.

At last, my horses having rapidly put on flesh, I made a start, and as the cool season was on I made an excellent trip by the Culgoa up the Warrego to Charleville. We made excellent camps every night and had plenty of rations, the customary habit on the cattle runs we traversed being to leave a fat hindquarter of beef hanging in the store verandah *pro bono publico*, so we had a good recollection of Warrego beef. We passed Claverton Downs, where I renewed my acquaintance with Messrs. Geary and Francis Bigge. As Mr. and Mrs. Geary and Mr. and Mrs. Bigge were going to the Charleville races we agreed to travel together, and we had a jolly camp or two under somewhat unusual comfort and society. At Charleville I made the acquaintance of several of the neighbouring squatters, who seemed a good sort. The races called for no particular comment, the principal events falling to the share of a common-looking little horse called "Whitefoot," which (as was often the case in those days at outside meetings) was said to have been a winner down below in another name.



ON CLAVERTON DOWNS RUN.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BARCOO AND HOME BY SPRINGSURE TO WOLFANG.

BIDDING goodbye to my friends at Charleville, I followed the Nive up to Lansdowne, a fine newly-formed property of Burne Mayne and Ward, and on to Tambo, the capital of the Barcoo, where I found the racing world of that fat district had gathered together to hold the festival of their annual races, and a jollier or better lot of fellows it would be difficult to find. I was known to some and had been heard of by the rest, and their hospitality was as unstinted as it was thoroughly acceptable. Messrs. Berkelman and Lambert, partners in some fine properties in that district, possessed a huge tent under which we made our comfortable shake-downs, and there we met the *élite* of the squatters around, including besides the above, those rare horsemen the brothers Govett, Felix Burne, the Messrs. Ellis with Dick Cobham as their pastoral adviser, Kelman and some of the Springsure men, and others whose names have for the moment dropped out of the recesses of my memory.

I certainly thought the condition of the horses, mostly trained without corn and fed entirely on the grasses of the country, quite wonderful. I was now for the first time initiated in the great sustaining powers which the grass of the western prairies of Queensland can impart to stock, whether it is to fatten the beast for the road to market, to train the racehorse, or sustain the roadster on a journey requiring the greatest endurance. These grand plains of the Barcoo here became imprinted in my mind as something better even than I had thought the Peak Downs to be, though the Barcoo, which stretched out on a far wider scale, certainly lacked the picturesqueness of the smaller district. I hope to touch in the latter part of my story on the development of the Mitchell and Gregory districts in which I became largely interested, and the former of which, *the* pastoral district par excellence of Queensland, I was proud to represent in the Queensland Parliament of 1881.

Leaving Tambo in the delicious winter of these western plains, filled with the comfort of new friendships and the open hospitality I had received on the Barcoo, I had four days' not unpleasant journeying over the rough country dividing the tableland of the Barcoo from the Comet country, arriving at Springsure, the chief township of the Comet or Leichardt District, in time to partake of the annual festivities of the Pastoral Show and Race Meeting to follow; no mean bill of fare in



*TO THE BARCOO AND HOME.*

those days, when the glory of the Comet District was at its height.

In 1867 that district was charming, and although the downs and plains of the Comet country lacked the peaks that ornamented our landscape of Peak Downs, still the fine black soil plains, covered with blue grass and timbered with clumps of drooping



SPRINGSURE MOUNTAIN.

mayall, recalled to the settler the aspect of Liverpool Plains, and gave every confidence of success to pastoral investment.

Springsure township was particularly well situated at the foot of a bold mass of rock, which for many miles formed a landmark to the approaching traveller, who could make sure of replenishing his packs at Hinton's stores and comforting the inner

man at the adjoining inn. From the rocks issued springs that ran the creeks for many years after the wet season of 1864, watering the stations lower down, such as Rainworth and Cardbeign, and enabling their owners to carry out their lambing operations with success.

The squatters of that district were a rare good lot of pioneers, and could boast in those days of Jesse Gregson of Rainworth, Patton of Albinia Downs, Thompson of Orion Downs, Nevile Griffiths of Nardoo, little Buchanan of Cardbeign (who could carry in his head the finances of the Colony), William Kelman of Meteor Downs, Paul of Glen-darriwill, Macintosh, and, last but not least, Charles S. Dicken, ever youthful and popular, who had left the sword for the pen, and guided as C.P.S. at Springsure as popular a lot of magistrates as ever sat on a Queensland Bench.

In the hands of these and many others the Springsure Pastoral Society was a great success, and its show became the forerunner of other similar institutions throughout the country. It was attended by visitors from Rockhampton and other parts, and the Springsure publicans reaped a golden harvest. Excellent races followed the show, several studs in the neighbourhood, such as Kelman's noted B Y breed from the Busbys of Cassilis, N.S.W., descendants of old "Gratis," "Cheddar," and "Corœbus," furnishing many a winner to the local and other races. They could boast of good horsemen too, and the

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“identities” of those merry days that may read these pages will doubtless recall the many triumphs of the Govetts on old “Reindeer,” Dick Hopkins on “Nimrod” and “Bosco,” and Charlie Dicken on that fine mare “Lucy Chambers.”

To wind up the show and races there would be a pleasant dinner, at which many a humorous speech



HORSE TEAMS, SPRINGSURE.

would be made, followed by still more amusing songs. Good old days those, that marked a fair page in the history of Central Queensland, of which it is well to make some record before “Time’s effacing fingers” have served to extinguish it.

Subsequent depression in pastoral affairs some time after began to press heavily on the Springsure and Comet districts, and a few of its leading spirits, good

men and true, succumbed to the weight of compound interest and fall in produce. Many, however, are pursuing distinguished careers in other spheres, and have shown the stuff they are made of. In this category it is not invidious to mention Jesse Gregson of the Australian Agricultural Company, and Charles S. Dicken, C.M.G., the popular secretary to, and so often acting for, the Agent-General of Queensland. These and many others will, I feel certain, never regret the old Springsure days, when under the balmy blue skies they smoked the sweet pipe of adventure and good fellowship.

After this jolly week in Springsure I was not sorry to cross the Nogoia and make home to Wolfgang with my brother, who had done very well at the Springsure races with "Dartford," "Bosco," "Nimrod," and other good nags. I must say here that my brother and I found time to train a few horses in a quiet way and were fairly fortunate; he won the Brisbane Cup with "Sydney," whilst I was fortunate to breed in "Sunrise" the winner of another Brisbane Cup, and our joint success with the black "Cassilis," the son of "Corœbus" (an imported son of "Slane's"), was considerable, for at weight-for-age he was quite the champion of our district, and handicaps were not so much in fashion then as they are now. "Cassilis" was a genuine stayer, and we eventually sold him to John Tait of New South Wales, the owner of the "Barb."

I returned to Peak Downs all the better for my

four months' trip through that great stretch of pastoral Australia from the Hunter to the Paroo and Bourke to the Peak Downs, a journey that had opened my eyes to the great resources of New South Wales and Queensland as pastoral colonies. The vast fattening frontage of the Warrego and the rich plains of the Barcoo, followed by the downs of the Comet and Peak Downs, had filled my mind with the coming future of our Colony, the fulfilment of which has been steady and continual, much of it at the hands of experienced southerners, whether Victorians or New South Welshmen.

A great part of the Warrego was even then owned by our Australian bachelor millionaire, the somewhat austere James Tyson, but I never heard in those parts that he did much either for the improvement of the stock or the development of the vast tracts he held, a fact one could not help contrasting with the improvement of adjoining country like Lansdowne, which the capital and energy of the Fairbairns under the management of Meredith had turned from a waterless grassy waste that would barely carry five-and-twenty thousand sheep in the sixties into a grand run that was not overstocked with a quarter of a million of sheep in the seventies. Fencing and water conservation by huge dams (artesian water had not then been discovered) were the order of the day, and this meant thousands of pounds trustingly invested on leasehold security by enterprising men. I recollect riding through a paddock

at Lansdowne in the seventies that carried 60,000 wethers.

At this time (1869) it became necessary that better security should be afforded to the pastoral interest, which was obviously staggering under the financial pressure of 1866, and to encompass this end, Clermont and Copperfield having some time before been formed into an electoral district and the seat of its representative, the gifted Robert Travers Atkin, having been declared vacant after a brief session, I was urged by my squatting friends to put up for the seat in order to assist in passing the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, which the Lilley Government then in power had projected for the relief and support of our predominant interest.

I must confess to a good deal of doubt and diffidence at this start into a political career at the time, but as the chosen candidate of a lot of warm friends and good neighbours I ended in waiving all drawbacks, and embarked into a hot contest with the proprietor of the local newspaper, the *Peak Downs Telegram*, Mr. Charles Hardie Buzacott, who might in those days be called an anti-squatter and advanced Liberal. That Charles H. Buzacott was a foeman worthy of anyone's steel his career in and out of Parliament and in the wider field of the metropolis of Queensland has amply proved. We hit out in those days and worked hard to collect the scattered votes, but having the support of the



manager of the Copper Mining Company I managed to beat my opponent by 26 votes.

I recollect the squatting rejoicings at Wolfgang and Clermont on that occasion, also certain feelings of pride at representing a district I had so largely helped to settle, and with which I had been so closely connected for a good many years. I had been elected in April, 1869, and the end of that month found me in Brisbane ready for the opening of the session of Parliament, and greeted by a number of friends old and new.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### INITIATION OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN QUEENSLAND, 1860-69.

I MAY here state with benefit to the readers of this



SIR GEORGE AND LADY BOWEN.

volume the political growth of Queensland between the opening of its first Parliament in May, 1860, and the period 1869, when I became able to speak from

## INITIATION OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT.

personal knowledge of Queensland parliamentary life.

Sir George Bowen, the first Governor of Queensland, had landed in Brisbane in December, 1859, and had been accompanied by Mr. Robert George Wyndham Herbert, a cousin of Lord Carnarvon's, whose brilliant University career and secretarial training had pointed him out as one of the rising men of the day. Mr. Herbert became the first Premier of Queensland under responsible government, and had at the start as his colleagues in the Executive Council of the Colony Messrs. Ratcliffe Pring and Robert Ramsay Mackenzie.

The first Legislative Council had made its start with Sir Charles Nicholson as President; he was, however, succeeded within a few months by Mr. Maurice, afterwards Sir Maurice, O'Connell. The Council consisted of:—

Maurice O'Connell,	John Balfour,
Francis Edward Bigge,	Alfred William Compigne,
George Fullerton,	John James Galloway,
James Laidley,	John McDougall,
Robt. George Massie,	Wm. Henry Yaldwin,
Henry Bates Fitz,	George Harris,
and Stephen Simpson.	

The first Electorates of the Colony which returned 26 members to the Legislative Assembly were filled as follows at the elections of April, 1860:—

Brisbane	.	.	.	3 members	George Raff, Henry Jordan, Charles Wm. Blakeney.
South Brisbane	.	.	1	„	Henry Richards.
Fortitude Valley	.	.	1	„	Charles Lilley.

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Town of Ipswich	.	.	3 members	Arthur Macalister, P. O'Sullivan, and G. E. Forbes.
Drayton and Toowoomba	1	..		William Henry Groom.
Warwick	.	.	1 ..	St. George R. Gore.
East Moreton	.	.	2 ..	George Edmonstone and Henry Buckley.
West Moreton	.	.	3 ..	George Thorn, Senr., A. D. Broughton, W. L. Nelson.
Eastern Downs	.	.	1 ..	Ratcliffe Pring.
Western Downs	.	.	2 ..	T. de Lacy Moffatt and James Taylor.
Northern Downs	.	.	1 ..	Charles Coxen.
Maranoa	.	.	1 ..	John Ferrett.
Burnett	.	.	2 ..	Robert Ramsay Mackenzie and C. R. Haly.
Wide Bay	.	.	1 ..	Gilbert Elliot.
Port Curtis	.	.	1 ..	Charles Fitzsimmons.
Leichardt	.	.	2 ..	R. G. W. Herbert and Charles James Royds.

Gilbert Elliot was unanimously elected Speaker, and Macalister Chairman of Committees.

Writing some forty years after these early days it is curious to reflect what little growth Central and Northern Queensland had so far made, Central Queensland in a House of 26 being represented only by the three members for Port Curtis and the Leichardt, and Northern Queensland being absolutely not represented in the first Parliament of the Colony. The Assembly of Queensland since 1898 has 72 members, a fair proportion of whom on the population basis represent Central and Northern Queensland electorates.

The first Governor's first speech was long and elaborate. It embraced, as in duty bound, the pressing needs of the best education for the rising

generation with exhibitions to the English Universities; it treated of telegraphic extension so as to connect Brisbane with the capitals of other colonies (a system which was opened in April, 1861), and it suggested also a cable *viâ* Torres Straits to Java; it advocated direct trade with Europe as well as the East by Torres Straits. Regular steam communication as far as Rockhampton was to be inaugurated, and Bills on Lands and Immigration were promised. The obstructive bars to navigation in the Brisbane, Mary and other rivers on the Eastern coast were to be dredged away, and the financial statement provided a substantial sum for a powerful steam dredge.

The revenue of Queensland as sketched forth in the financial statement of 1860 was expected to be £160,000 and the expenditure for the same financial year something under £150,000. We have as I write (1898) lived to see the revenue of Queensland total £3,613,150 :—

	£	s.	d.
The expenditure . . . . .	3,604,263	0	0
The total imports . . . . .	5,429,191	0	0
The exports . . . . .	9,091,557	0	0
The imports per head . . . . .		11	6 11
The exports „ „ . . . . .		19	0 1
Total trade „ „ . . . . .		30	7 0

The years 1861 and 1862 were eminently favourable to the growth of the nascent Colony, the pastoral development of which during these two years, as mentioned elsewhere, took firm root, espe-

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cially in Central, Western, and Northern Queensland. Telegraphs had been started and the first Queensland Exhibition opened. A Show of the first Horticultural and Agricultural Society took place in Brisbane, and a new Government House, built at a cost of £10,000, had been occupied by Sir George Bowen and his family.

1863 was a droughty year throughout the Colony, the break-up of the drought at the end of that year and commencement of the following one being marked with the severest floods the Colony had up to that time known. This great rainfall, which extended to outside districts, misled settlers in many instances as to the rainfall of the country they had settled in.

February 25, 1864, saw the important function of turning the sod of the first Queensland railway, performed at Ipswich, the battle of the gauges having, after a long and instructive Parliamentary fight, been settled in favour of the 3ft. 6in. gauge, a gauge which I may here mention has fulfilled all that was required of it, and affords a smooth if not very rapid conveyance for the traffic required of it. The first railway from Ipswich to the plateau of the Darling Downs cost over £10,000 a mile, and was destined to be Queensland's costliest railway, as the engineering difficulties of the main range were considerable. Once over the Coast Range, later constructions have proved that Queensland can build her lines for one-fourth of the above cost, in fact less

than was paid by the Colony in its early days for corduroy roads for its wheeled traffic over the once infamous road between Ipswich and Toowoomba. It is not too much to say that the future of Queensland, in common with that of older countries, rests greatly on its future policy of cheap and light railways wherever these can be conscientiously given to a struggling community. Queensland, as I write, has a railway bill of over sixteen millions, but has nearly 2,500 miles of railway to show for it, a record which none of the other colonies can approach in the shape of value for capital expended.

In 1864 Mr. Herbert's Ministry was composed of himself as Colonial Secretary, Thomas de Lacy Moffatt as Colonial Treasurer, Arthur Macalister as Minister of Public Works and Lands, and Ratcliffe Pring as Attorney-General.

De Lacy Moffatt died in October, 1864, and was succeeded by his brother-in-law, J. P. Bell.

As Minister for Public Works Macalister had the hardest work, the initiation of railways alone requiring great forethought, besides which the development of a great colony is something like that of "station improvements" which are constantly required, and no new member of the legislature was held worth his salt by his constituents who did not try to get a dam made or well sunk on some waterless road, to say nothing of a jail and court-house for every opening township.

I may here mention that the following members

had been added to the roll of the Legislative Council since its creation three years back: John Bramston (afterwards Attorney-General for Queensland, then for Hong Kong, and lastly Assistant Under Secretary for the Colonies in London, now Sir John Bramston, C.B., K.C.M.G.), E. I. C. Browne, St. George R. Gore, Hon. Louis Hope, William Landsborough (the explorer), John McConnel, Francis North, Richard J. Smith, John Watts, Wm. D. White, and Western Wood, some of these representing a few resignations, the Council totalling 21 in all at that time. And the following new members of the Assembly had taken the place of retiring members: Joshua P. Bell, Henry Challinor, Benjamin and Robert Cribb, John Douglas, John Edwards, John Donald McLean, T. B. Pugh, Gordon Sandeman, and Arnold Wienholt, names that included some of Queensland's foremost colonists and a welcome infusion of squatting blood.

The Viceregal speech, read with emphasis by Sir George Bowen, alluded to the construction of the first railway from Ipswich, and promised that from Rockhampton, and Sir George was further able "To congratulate my Parliament for the fifth time on the rapid but solid progress of Queensland which has been now addressed to you in opening the annual sessions of four successive years, also to say that the population has doubled in two years and eight months, and the revenue and trade and other chief elements of prosperity have increased in equal ratio with our



population. It appears, moreover, that notwithstanding the recent disastrous floods the revenue of the first quarter of the current year exceeds by no less than 40 per cent. the revenue of the corresponding quarter of 1863." This was the first appearance of Joshua Bell, who moved the adoption of the Address in a speech that created a most favourable impression, John Douglas, who afterwards attained considerable reputation, taking a prominent part, also for the first time, in the debate that followed.

1865 opened with the same Ministry, with the exception that Joshua Bell had succeeded T. de Lacy Moffatt, Bell thus early in his career obtaining Cabinet rank. Congratulations were given in the Viceregal speech on the appointment of an Agent-General, and upon the establishment of a steam service *via* Torres Straits, Sir George Bowen ending his speech with the following pregnant and remarkable statement: "The Registrar-General has furnished the Government and me with a clear and able statement of the result of the statistics for 1864 when compared with those of 1860, the first year of the political existence of the Colony. It appears that the centesimal increase during the interval of four years was exactly as follows:—

" Population . . . . .	195 per cent.
Revenue . . . . .	139 "
Trade . . . . .	178 "
Shipping . . . . .	189 "

The other elements of prosperity have advanced in similar proportions, that is to say, they have been nearly trebled. It will be for you to consolidate the many blessings which, under the favour of Divine Providence, Queensland already enjoys."

In the following year, 1866, Queensland lost the services of Mr. Robert Herbert, her first Premier, who returned to England after six years of eventful tenure of office; he had set the Parliamentary machine of the Colony going, and that on safe and dignified lines, and had every reason to congratulate himself on his share of the remarkable result sketched by his chief in the foregoing statement. I am glad to say that after many years industriously spent as the working head of an enormously increasing Colonial Office, he continues, as Sir Robert Herbert, G.C.B., to retain his interest in the great Colony, the Parliamentary fortunes of which he first directed.

Mr. Herbert was succeeded by Arthur Macalister as Premier and Minister for Lands, the other positions in the Ministry being occupied by Robert Ramsay Mackenzie, Charles Lilley, Joshua Bell, and John Douglas. Macalister had assisted Herbert in former Ministries, and as a leading Ipswich solicitor had great local knowledge and attractions; he might be called a useful if not eminent Parliamentarian, with shrewd business-like qualities, but he could hardly be compared in administrative capacity with either his predecessor Herbert, or his successors,

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Lilley and Palmer. Still he deserved well of his country, and virtually ended his days as the Colony's representative in London.

Robert Mackenzie, afterwards Sir Robert Mackenzie of Coull, was a man of high type, and safe



MR. ROBERT G. W. HERBERT  
(First Premier of Queensland.)

and honourable in his representation of the "pure merino" of those days. Joshua Bell of Jimbour was a great favourite with everybody, public and private. Handsome and prosperous, he was our champion representative of Queensland growth; he never made

an enemy, but, alas! died in the prime of life, President of the Legislative Council of Queensland, as Sir Joshua Bell, K.C.M.G. Fortunately his eldest son is imbued with proper political ambition, and so far is treading in his father's footsteps in the Colony of his birth, and one can only wish that there were more with the same ambition.

1866 saw the advent in the Queensland Parliament of the gifted and high-minded William Henry Walsh as member for Maryborough, who was destined to take a place in a good many Ministries and fill the Speaker's Chair with great credit for some years.

The Ministerial speech of the Session of 1866 that saw the foregoing Ministry in power, congratulated the Colony on both the northern and southern railways having been pushed forward. It alluded to the stream of continental immigration, and stated the protracted drought to have been the main cause of the temporary depression (which it was not, as it really arose from the financial panic in London), and it wound up with the satisfactory statement "That the revenue of 1865 had exceeded that of 1864 by 25 per cent., and that during the six years since the establishment of the Colony the European population had increased fourfold, whilst our revenue and trade had been more than trebled, and pastoral settlement had been extended over an area at least four times larger than the area of the United Kingdom."

This year saw some labour riots at Brisbane, which indicated the coming financial depression.

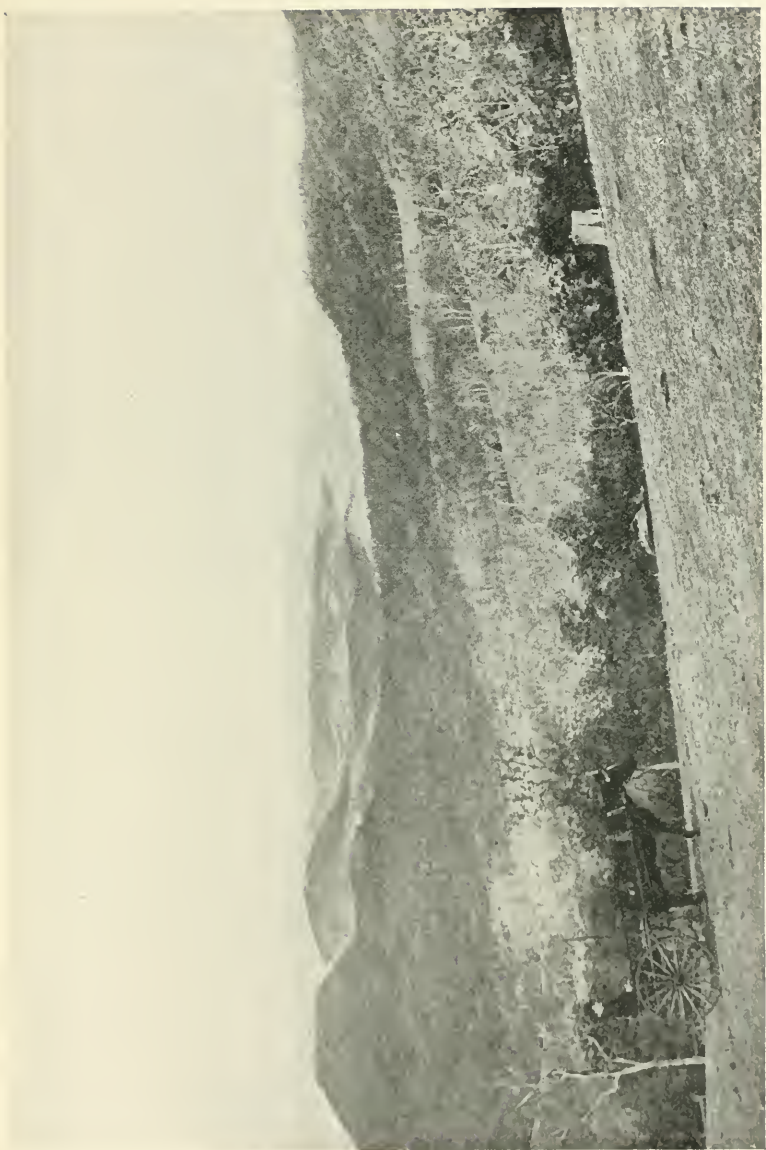
In 1867 the Ministry of Arthur Macalister met Parliament, with the exceptions to its roll that T. B. Stephens took the Treasurership, and Joshua Bell relieved Macalister of the Lands Department, John Douglas becoming Minister for Works, and the Postmaster-Generalship fell to St. George Gore in the Upper House. This Ministry, however, was beaten in August, and was succeeded by Sir Robert Ramsay Mackenzie as Premier and Colonial Treasurer, Arthur Hunter Palmer as Colonial Secretary and Secretary for Public Works, Edward W. Lamb as Secretary for Lands, Ratchliffe Pring as Attorney-General, and Thomas Murray Prior as Postmaster-General.

This year 1867 was a busy one for Legislators with its session in May and a second one in August. The Viceregal speech at the earlier date stated that "The Leasing and Agricultural Reserves Act had been brought into active operation and the survey of Crown lands vigorously prosecuted." It furthermore thus described the position of Queensland: "The public domain is happily of such vast extent and of such varied character that there can be no practical difficulty in supplying the utmost possible demand for the possession of landed property." Prophetic words, uttered over thirty years ago, which were destined to be thoroughly realised. For whether it be agricultural soil on the Darling Downs, or the western plains of Roma, or the coast lands of Mackay, Bundaberg, or the Burdekin, the rich wool-

growing and fattening pastures of the great west, or the mineral holdings of Gympie, Charters Towers, Chillagoe and Croydon, or the Cloncurry, Queensland's reputation is now thoroughly established, and the requirements for every description of settlement are being fully met.

The railway to Toowoomba was this session announced as open to traffic, and notice was given of contracts for further extension. This was an immense relief and comfort to travellers inland from Brisbane, as the road from Ipswich to the foot of the main range had long been a "slough of despond," and had become, where not corduroyed after wet seasons, an almost impassable morass. From the foot of the main range there were about ten miles of an ascent to Toowoomba, covering a gradual height of some 2,000 ft., the engineering being clever and picturesque, the windings of a certain gap being followed which brings the line, backwards and forwards almost over its own steps, thus gaining the summit almost imperceptibly. From the top a grand panorama towards the east is obtained over the country traversed, chiefly sombre forest of the eucalyptus type, with crags and knolls that were once the fastnesses of the fighting aboriginal tribes of the early Darling Downs days, one peak being pointed out as having been held by natives who checked the approach of their aggressors by rolling huge pieces of rock upon them. Whether the engineering of this line was the most saving in





SCENE NEAR TOOWOOMBA, QUEENSLAND.





expenditure I have heard great doubts expressed, having been told that a much better gap has been found since those days.

I may here say a few words about Toowoomba, which was my home for a few sessions. That good, rich red-soil township is unquestionably the sanatorium of Queensland; it is almost impossible not to feel well there; the air is like champagne, and the tropical denizen of the north and west can soon find renewed strength and vigour for them if he brings his family, as he often does, to this capital of the Darling Downs. Toowoomba has a great future before it, being at the junction of railway lines south to the New South Wales border and west to Roma and Charleville; not only is it a great agricultural centre, but it is one from which a pastoralist can by telegraph command markets, or if necessary travel by rail and coach to his possessions.

In this third Parliament of Queensland the following additional members were added to the roll of the Assembly: James (now Sir James) Garrick, destined to make his way hereafter as a valuable Minister and Agent-General for Queensland; Robert Ramsay, hereafter alluded to as Colonial Treasurer; George Clark of Talgai, T. H. Fitzgerald, Charles Fitzsimmons, William Miles, for some time a Minister for Works; A. B. Pritchard, and Henry Thorn, a brother of George Thorn, who was for some little time Premier of Queensland.

The Governor's speech in the second session of

1867 mentioned the promised visit of the Duke of Edinburgh, then Prince Alfred, and dwelt on the proposed enlargement of the settled districts with a selection of 40 to 640 acres of land to be leased for eight years at 2s. 6d., which should form the purchase-money, the land under offer to comprise most of the Darling Downs, East and West Moreton, the district of Wide Bay, and "all lands within reasonable distance of navigable rivers." It alluded to the readjustment of electorates and fresh laws for the registration of electors and the conduct of elections. The end of 1867 brought with it the departure of Governor Bowen, who had been transferred to the Government of New Zealand, which he was to assume on December 21, 1867, and his departure was made the occasion of reciprocal addresses between the Legislature and himself that testified to the friendly nature of the bonds that had existed between Queensland and her first Governor. As might be expected, Sir George Bowen's farewell message was happily put. It told Parliament that "he had earnestly laboured throughout the eight years of his administration to perform his duty to the best of his judgment and ability; he would hereafter continue to regard with proud and grateful interest the progress of this Colony where he and his family had received so much sympathy and respect, and with the history of which his name as that of its first Governor must remain for ever connected." A graceful reply was sent from both

branches of the Legislature, which voted a sum of money to be spent in procuring a good portrait of the retiring Governor.

The sitting in March, 1868, was renewed in August of same year, Sir Maurice O'Connell acting as Governor; the occasion was made interesting by both Houses meeting for the first time in the new Houses of Parliament, which had been erected nominally for £17,500, Sir Maurice O'Connell stating that "he had pleasure in meeting you for the first time in this noble building, which the munificence of a former Parliament has provided as the future Palace of the Legislature." Allusion was made to the attempted assassination of Prince Alfred by O'Farrell on 12th March in one of the little bays of Sydney Harbour, Clontarf, soon after his return from Queensland, where the previous month he had laid the foundation stone of the Brisbane Grammar School.

I was in Sydney, stopping at the Union Club, at the time of this attempt, and well do I remember the horror it created. It was at first thought the wound was mortal, and it was reported as such. The Prince was brought to Government House from Clontarf, and the public were soon relieved by an examination, which proved the bullet to have glanced round the ribs without penetrating the vital parts. It was a period of intense excitement, and as all the Prince's shipmates were going in and out of the Club eager for news, the reaction,

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when word was brought that there was no danger, was tremendous, and a good many healths were drunk to the complete recovery of the genial Prince.

The Viceregal speech spoke of a million acres of the choicest portion of the Darling Downs being thrown open for agriculture and 800,000 acres in East and West Moreton, and an allusion was made to the difficulties of accurate survey. Now I must say I always thought the Survey Department of Queensland under its old heads, Augustus Gregory and W. A. Tully, a very wonderful and accurate department—a marvel, in fact, of administration. Considering its vast dealings, with the drawbacks of drought and flood, scrub and plain, and all the incidents of such a widespread country, there were wonderfully few mistakes made, and no corruption was ever even tried.

In August, on the arrival of Governor Blackall, Parliament was prorogued preparatory to a dissolution, in consequence of the defeat of the Mackenzie Ministry on the Address, by a majority of two in a House of twenty-seven members. The downfall of the Squatting Ministry was followed by the following Liberal administration on 25th November :—

Charles Lilley . . .	Premier and Attorney-General.
T. B. Stephens . . .	Colonial Secretary.
T. H. Fitzgerald . . .	Colonial Treasurer.
A. Macalister . . .	Secretary for Lands and Works.
John Douglas . . .	Postmaster-General.

Parliament met for its second session in that year late in November, 1868, the session lasting till April,

1869. Gilbert Elliot was for the fourth time elected Speaker, well-earned eulogiums being made on his conduct in the chair now for twelve sessions. And it was pleasant to record thus early that "The Parliament of Queensland would bear a pleasing comparison with any other Parliament in any part of the world in the propriety and decorum which characterised its debates."

Governor Blackall's opening speech of the Fourth Parliament of Queensland was a short production, as it was proposed to curtail the present session so as to re-assemble at a more convenient time of the year, the closing months of which were then more devoted to the pastoral exigencies of lambing and shearing than, at any rate, in Western and Northern Queensland, they are now, when shearing often begins before July, and lambing is carried out still earlier in March and April. Thanks were expressed for rains, which led the Governor to hope "That the disastrous drought which had for an unusually lengthened period affected the Colony is about to give place to a succession of seasons alike favourable to the agriculturist and grazier." Parliament was prorogued on 22nd April, 1869, a reconstruction of the Ministry having taken place on 28th January, by which Arthur Hodgson became Colonial Secretary and James Taylor Minister for Lands, thus giving a backbone of solidity to the Lilley Ministry, Hodgson and Taylor being large holders of real property on the Darling Downs.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY LIFE.

APRIL, 1869, saw me, as before mentioned, in Brisbane taking my seat as M.L.A. for Clermont, and I must confess that after the ups and downs of a bush life, which have formed the preceding chapters of my sunny Australian career, it was pleasant to be a representative of the people for the part of the great Colony that one had assisted in settling, all the more so as the Council and Assembly were composed of a lot of straight old colonists who gave character to those institutions, which I hardly need say were formed strictly on the model of the English Parliament. The natural surroundings were charming, the Houses of Parliament were even then (they have been added to since) noble buildings, rather beyond the wants of the country than otherwise, though they were not so after subsequent additions to the roll of the Assembly had been made.

The Speaker, old Gilbert Elliot, was a benign and fine old gentleman, courteous to all members; his Clerk of the Assembly, Louis Bernays, C.M.G., who I am glad to say is still to the fore, was the



friendly adviser of all new members and the trusty confidant of most of the old ones who wanted to mature, *secundum artem*, a Bill for the good of the Colony at large, or pass a measure of relief for their own constituents. The Parliamentary Library was also an attractive feature, with a librarian (Mr. Donovan, C.M.G.), whose industry and attention is beyond praise. In fact, ensconced in one of the many comfortable armchairs to be found there, and given a bright Queensland winter's day, with a look-out on the glorious vista of the Botanical Gardens below you and the chosen literature of the old world within your reach, a Queensland member of Parliament had much to be thankful for, and I think could have done very well without the £300 a year which, I am told, is his solatium now.

The Legislative Council was presided over by that distinguished old soldier, Sir Maurice O'Connell, who had won his spurs in the Carlist wars and wore the grand cordons of the orders of Ferdinand and Isabella and Charles III. of Spain with the grace and dignity of a Spanish hidalgo—a good type of colonist was Sir Maurice, handsome, courteous and suave.

The Ministry at the opening of the session of 1869 was a coalition one, of which Charles Lilley was the Premier and Attorney-General, Arthur Hodgson Colonial Secretary, McAlister Secretary for Public Works, James Taylor Minister for Lands, T. B.

Stephens, Colonial Treasurer, and John Douglas Postmaster-General.

The chief provisions of the ministerial programme, as set forth in the speech from the throne, which I will however not quote *in extenso*, were :— Additional Representation, Amendment and Consolidation of Laws relating to the Occupation of Crown Lands (virtually the great “Pastoral Leases Act of 1869”), Polynesian labour, “demanding a determined solution of the question.” The cotton bonus came next, and it was singular that in the attempt to establish it the speech stated: “That by our liberality it had established that article on the list of exports, thus providing an almost unlimited field for the extension of agricultural enterprise.” Later on it became evident that the production of cotton in Queensland diminished in the same ratio as the bounty, and when that was withdrawn altogether the production of cotton ingloriously ceased—so much for bounties and bonus.

It is well to recall here the extreme financial pressure we suffered from at that time, quoting the Governor’s speech, which went on to say, and it was not badly put, that “In common with the most wealthy countries in the world we have endured, since 1866, a severe and discouraging depression in trade and commerce. The sacrifices of these past years, however, have not been made in vain, we regret great private losses by our citizens, much public inconvenience, and great suffering.”

And it alluded to "the spirit of economy roused by our reverses." Twenty-three years after, in 1893, amidst the crash of our banks and financial institutions and depreciation of even real property, much the same remarks could with justice have been made; let us hope that the periods between these colonial crashes will get longer and longer.

On this my first session I recollect Jordan moved the address in reply, and I was asked, as a new member, to second it, which I did, specially stipulating, however, that I did not pledge myself to support the Government, though I must confess I wanted to get out of them as much as I could for my somewhat waterless constituency. The *pièce de résistance* of the session was the "Pastoral Leases Act of 1869," which has since formed the basis of Queensland Pastoral Legislation.

A tenure of twenty-one years was given to the Squatter at the then low rentals, with an increase of ten per cent. on same after each period of seven years; the lessees were to be allowed to protect their head stations or other improvements by the pre-emptive right to buy not more than 2,560 acres, at 10s. an acre out of every 25 square miles, or 16,000 acres, which was the regulation "block of country." The Government were to have the right to reserve the same quantity by proclamation, and a further invidious clause was introduced that the Government should be able to resume "any portion" of the Pastoralists' leasehold, provided that the

schedule of the same was laid before both Houses of Parliament and was not dissented from by same for sixty days. I well remember the fight over this, as it seemed to us then, iniquitous clause, and the bitter feeling these long nights' debates engendered between Pastoralists and Anti-Pastoralists, but the coalition ministry was too strong, and, half a loaf being better than no bread, the measure was finally accepted. I must say here that in after days, during the currency of this Act, I can recollect no instance in which the obnoxious clause was used to the detriment of any lessee.

This Act of 1869 gave a feeling of security to the Pastoralists, and when things began to mend in the early seventies, many a fine property changed hands at high figures on the strength of the tenure that a few years before had not been deemed good enough for the then impoverished Squatter.

The Act of 1869 was remodelled in 1884 to meet the exigencies of a growing demand for pastoral land in smaller areas. There have been in all the other colonies similar amending Land Acts from time to time, but I can safely say that in no colony, with the exception of South Australia perhaps, has more respect been paid than in Queensland to the genuine rights of the leaseholder; hence the capital the Colony has attracted, not only from Great Britain but other colonies, especially Victoria.

As regards the leaders of parties in the Parliament of Queensland of that time, the palm of oratorical

success of course easily lay with Charles Lilley, Q.C., who was gifted by nature with an excellent and persuasive voice and was never at a loss for the right word to illustrate his argument or chastise his foes. He would have held his own in any Assembly in the world, but he was his own enemy in that he never gave sufficient credit for high motives, and was avowedly a radical in a new country, where you don't



SIR ARTHUR HUNTER PALMER.

want to uproot, but rather to plant out. His opponent, Arthur Hunter Palmer, who was the leader of the Pastoral party (afterwards Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer, President of the Legislative Council), was a wonderful man to emanate from sheep station management. Though not an orator, he had the convincing gift of speaking the strongest common sense in excellent and at times indeed eloquent language ;

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he was always forcible, and when they lost him in the Legislative Assembly, on his retirement to the Presidency of the Council, Pastoral Queensland suffered a heavy loss and the Colony generally a sound and honest statesman. The fact is the management of a colony is a good deal like the management of a station on a large scale, and Palmer had proved himself an excellent station manager, and in that business learned the best use to put the country to and the control of the various kinds of labour required to develop it. Amongst those who were numbered in the Parliament of that day some few filled, and that ably, positions in the ministries of the day, such as John Douglas, Joshua Bell, Arthur Hodgson, Robert Ramsay, Archibald Archer, and John Bramston ; but Lilley and Palmer were the conspicuous leaders, and as such I venture to pay a tribute to their memory, especially as they have passed away.

Following these notable men other statesmen have since filled the roll of service as leaders of parties and Premiers in Queensland, to wit, Sir Samuel Griffith, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, and more lately Sir Hugh Nelson ; and when in the next and fast approaching century the history of Queensland comes to be written ample justice will no doubt be given to the services of these distinguished men. Having sat some time in Parliament with the first two I may venture to touch upon their leading characteristics : Sir Samuel Griffith, who now fills with honour the post of Chief Justice of Queensland, is a first rate



specimen of blended colonial and English education, and by indomitable industry and perseverance, as well as great ability, he soon attained the highest position at the Bar in Queensland. No case was too long for him, no hours too fatiguing; he thus early earned the highest fees of any counsel in the colony, and the statute book of Queensland and records of Hansard bear testimony to the volume of his indefatigable industry. It may, however, be a moot point whether clever lawyers always make the best statesmen, and perhaps Sir Samuel Griffith's most valuable work politically for Queensland will be found to have been watching that the statesmanship of Sir Thomas McIlwraith should not assume too broad a groove, whilst Sir Thomas' best work on the other hand will perhaps have been that of seeing that his opponent Sir Samuel Griffith's legislation was not too narrow.

Sir Samuel's political services are, however, quite apart from the great legal ones he has during his long career been able to render Queensland, which are comprised in his "Criminal Code Act" of 1899, and his even more recent efforts in the cause of Federation.

Sir Thomas McIlwraith's abilities and character were of an opposite type to that of his opponent, being bold, prompt, and masterful, almost too sanguine in fact; still, in critical times of doubt or difficulty, when a strong man was wanted at the helm, that strong man was there, and the people of Queensland, and notably Brisbane, had at one time immense con-



fidence in him ; it is a matter of regret that ill-health has in his case prematurely closed a great career.

Of Sir Hugh Nelson, who has succeeded Sir Arthur Palmer in that haven of Queensland repose, the Presidency of the Legislative Council, it will be said of him that as Premier he was always safe on the bridge, with just and honourable instincts and a good shrewd head for accounts, which made him an especially good treasurer. Sir Hugh is another instance of sheep station management qualifying for the bigger grasp of colonial statesmanship, his early days having been spent in the industrious care of flocks and herds, first for others, then for himself. In his too early and serene retirement Sir Hugh Nelson must remain pleasantly conscious of having made but few enemies, and, at the same time, must congratulate himself in leaving a difficult task for his successor ; for the Queensland of to-day is a different country to the Queensland of thirty years ago, having expanded more consistently and naturally than any other of the Australian colonies from the fact of her possessing a greater diversity of soil and climate and resources within her, riches which seem to come out always when wanted, and that at the right time.

1870 saw MacAlister elected Speaker, *vice* Elliot resigned ; and it also saw two dissolutions of the Assembly during twelve months, the first given to the Lilley Cabinet, the second to the Palmer Ministry in July, the Governor granting the second “con-

sidering the defeat of both parties in the Legislative Assembly within so short a time, and the vital importance to the colony of a decision on its future financial policy." The fact was in those days the balance of parties in a house of thirty members was a matter of one or two votes, and often that of the casting vote of the Speaker; and I recollect Palmer congratulating me when I came down a second time as member for Clermont on "forming the Government majority," and he considerably made me whip of his party on that occasion.

Palmer's Ministry consisted of himself as Colonial Secretary, Bramston as Attorney-General, Robert Ramsay Colonial Treasurer, W. H. Walsh Secretary for Works, Malbon Thompson Minister for Lands, and T. L. Murray Prior as Postmaster-General, a strong team as things went, the Colonial Treasurer, Robert Ramsay, making "the most clear and lucid statement of the country's financial position at that date that had so far been furnished to the country." It is well to recall that the loan account of the colony at that date in the Acts passed 1861, '63, '64, and '66 amounted in all to only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions.

Palmer's programme was met on 30th November by a series of counter resolutions framed by Lilley which became famous, and which it is not uninteresting to quote as a most liberal dish. The resolutions were as follows:—

1. Judicious system of immigration and liberal scheme of public works.

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2. Revenue to be derived from sale and rent of Crown lands in each district to be applied towards meeting interest of all money expended in public works in such district.

3. That with this view it is expedient to alienate land at a low rate or at cost of survey in fee simple, reserving a perpetual annual rent proportioned to the special advantages of their location.

The division on this question was fourteen for and fourteen against the measure, the Speaker giving his casting vote for the Government and against these resolutions in order to enable the Government to procure supply. This meant a narrow shave for a gamble in land and the adoption of "sell the land first and tax it after." With the limited knowledge we had of the real value of our lands in those days I always considered this proposal a very dangerous one, and succeeding years did not alter my opinion, and ever after I should have ticketed Charles Lilley as "dangerous" in politics.

In July, 1870, Thomas McIlwraith made his first appearance in Parliament as member for the Warrego; he then took his seat on Lilley's side, and presumably voted for these resolutions.

In 1871, Governor Blackall, an amiable gentleman who had never been strong and who had suffered from residence in hot countries, died, and was succeeded, after a long interregnum filled by Sir Maurice O'Connell as Lieutenant-Governor, by the Marquis of Normanby. Lord Normanby, besides his long Par-

liamentary experience in the House of Commons as Liberal whip, brought with him the solid prestige and sporting tastes of the English country gentleman. He was accompanied by Lady Normanby, who endeared herself to all, and employed as private secretary his kinsman, Captain Irwin C. Maling, a



MARQUIS AND MARCHIONESS OF NORMANBY.

smart soldier, and as A.D.C. a son of his great friend, Mr. Martin Tucker Smith, the late lamented Charles Ridley Smith. These two lively gentlemen kept the society of Brisbane going with an *éclat* the capital had been a stranger to during the days of depression. Lord Normanby's Governorship was in every way a

success, his strong common sense and parliamentary experience standing him in good stead as a constitutional Governor, especially in cases of precedent and disputes between rival leaders, which were not uncommon in those days. This year saw nascent signs of returning prosperity, the long series of droughts having broken up, and that in some districts with destructive suddenness.

1872 saw the introduction of an Electoral Districts Bill, which gave twelve new members to the Assembly, giving thereby more scope to its discussions. Normanby was one of the new electorates and I was glad to sit for it, ceding my seat for Clermont to C. J. Graham, who some time after became Under Secretary for Education. Samuel Walker Griffith this year began his eventful Parliamentary career as member for East Moreton; also the witty and ever cheerful B. D. Morehead, who moved the address in reply. A new loan bill for a million and a half was proposed, raising the whole indebtedness of Queensland in July, 1872, to £5,129,000, about a sixth of our present burden.

1873 brought the new members with it, and an excellent lot they were; C. J. Graham moved the address in a promising speech, A. B. Buchanan, called "Little Buchanan," seconding it in an equally sensible speech, Henry King, who afterwards occupied the Speaker's chair, making a trenchant oration; altogether the additions to Parliament were a success. It was noteworthy, as recalling the economic progress

the colony was making at the time, that the Colonial Treasurer, Robert Ramsay, speaking in the debate on the Address, stated the following fact regarding our loans; that whereas £1,170,956 had in 1866 been offered at six per cent. and disposed of at an average of £90, or £6 13s. per cent., the recent loan (1872-73) at £4 had fetched £87, or £4 11s. 10d.; the colony had thus saved £2 1s. 4d. per cent. Had the public purse of the Colony been able to secure a continuity of the services of so clear-headed a business man as Robert Ramsay as its custodian, it would have been a great advantage to the Colony. He was, however, affected at the time with a throat ailment, which caused his early retirement, much to the loss of the Colony. I am happy to say he still lives in the enjoyment of his excellent faculties in England, his numerous sons carrying on the pastoral occupations of the family in Queensland.

The end of 1873 saw another dissolution granted by Lord Normanby, "so as to allow a new and enlarged house to be elected on a broader basis of representation." The fact was the turn of the wheel had come and wool was returning to its old price and everything recovering from the dark days of 1866-70.

1874 opened uncommonly well for the Colony, which was jumping ahead, a ministerial statement being made to the effect that the financial operations for the last two years showed a surplus of revenue over expenditure of £240,000 after liquidating a previous deficit of £56,000.

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J. R. Dickson and C. H. Buzacott, both excellent men, made their first appearance in Parliament at this period ; the first continues a useful business-like career that has enabled him at one time to occupy the Premier's chair, and since as Chief Secretary to render excellent services to Queensland as its delegate in London on the Federation question.

Mr. Buzacott, after a useful career, has found rest and repose in the Legislative Council.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## SHEEP STATION LIFE, WOLFANG.

“REVENONS À NOS MOUTONS.” I now resume my squatting narrative. With the year 1870 began better hopes for the pastoral industry of Queensland, though that particular year was a very dry one. The financial panic of 1866 was giving way to restored confidence, wool was beginning to look up, capital for fencing and water conservation purposes was forthcoming to reliable managers, and the banks began to give out what they had been so desperately anxious to pull in.

In the Peak Downs country, headed by the Messrs. Travers, settlers now began fencing their runs and dismissing the old-time shepherd. I well recollect the endless discussions managers and owners had amongst themselves regarding the gauges and description of the sheep fencing whenever they met or camped with each other. Good bushmen, *i.e.*, fencers, etc., were in great demand, carriage was brisk, and indents for wire of different specifications in the London market reached large proportions.

It was clear that country under fencing would carry a lot more stock than under the old shepherd-

ing system, when a flock of sheep with a knowing old hand at its tail would be driven over the pasture instead of roaming in perfect freedom and taking its time to nibble the untrodden grass as it chose, either by day or by night; the habits of stock in semi-tropical Queensland favouring feeding at early dawn and late at night, the sheep generally camping in the day time. Besides which, a lazy shepherd, who wasn't watched, might not let out his sheep till any hour.

We were not slow in following Messrs. Travers' lead in beginning our fencing at Wolfgang, for which purpose we were lucky in having a splendid reserve of iron bark timber on the outskirts of our run. Fencing meant increasing our debit at the bank, but we saw repose from lost sheep hunting and a smaller labour bill in days to come, as under the paddocking system the boundary rider might look after twenty thousand sheep instead of three.

Of course the native dog had to be exterminated, and the demand for strychnine to poison baits with became great. We formed an Association which offered a pound a head for the scalp and tail of each native dog, so that, besides our own boundary riders, mailmen far and wide drove a good trade in securing scalps by laying baits on distant tracks. I recollect one year on the Peak Downs when nearly two thousand dogs were paid for, causing a wholesale destruction of the dreaded dingo, which afterwards led to an inroad of marsupials, a counter pest

which increased rapidly after the destruction of their natural enemy. The district for several years hereafter had to suffer heavily for thus destroying the balance of nature ; many runs had to add to the sheep fencing marsupial wire netting, which was very costly ; this after trying all kinds of battues to shoot off the wallaby and kangaroo inside the paddocks as well as those outside, which bred up in thousands in the outlying scrubs of the Nogoia and Belyando which surround Peak Downs.

The break up of the long drought of 1870 took place, I well remember, in a very summary fashion on the last day of February, 1871. Watercourses had not run for fifteen months, the black soil plains of Wolfang were parched and grassless, and large cracks gaped in the soil here and there, dangerous to sheep and horse ; the live stock, with flaccid sides and drooping heads, hung about the wells waiting for the filling of the tanks and troughs by the primitive but certain horse-and-whim process of those days, for our water supply at Wolfang in dry weather was wholly dependent on wells, the supply being secured at under 100 feet. We used horse-whims of one regular Riverina pattern, with thirty-gallon self-acting buckets attached. The moment the horse began hauling at the whim the sheep round the well would rouse up and make a dash for the spouts that filled the troughs, giving the whim driver all he could do to prevent their smothering. It was wonderful, certainly, to see how

stock would hold out with little and dry grass so long as they could get a belly-full of sweet, cool water.

It was a close and hot Sunday afternoon, I recollect, when my brother and I rode down to our agistment paddocks near Clermont to see how matters were getting on there, when on our return at sundown we noticed a bank of dark cloud, the first for many a month, rising over the line of Peak Range, distant some twenty miles from our homestead. This bank kept steadily and swiftly rising, an ominous stillness prevailed, and we made up our minds that something unusual was going to happen. By dark the sky had become covered, and soon, driven by a north-east wind, the water spout came down upon us fast and furious, so much so that we had to run up to the kitchen for our evening meal, which the servant couldn't face the storm to bring down. It poured with a thin close rain, which meant big floods, and found out every crack in our slabbed huts and shingled roofs, sleep being out of the question; so brother and self and our *fidus achates* and factotum storekeeper, Baldwin, kept walking up and down the verandah wondering what disaster the morning would bring with it.

We had a fine lot of breeding ewes about to lamb in our lower paddock and dreaded their having run into the shelter of the creek timber, which in a big flood would mean their being swept away. There was no lull till morning in the thick rain, that kept

falling at the tropical rate of perhaps over an inch an hour, and compelled the reflection that in this land of extremes you really could never tell whether to dread most a famine or a flood. The grey morning dawned with the tailing-off of the water-spout, and showed the distant line of the creek water covering the low mayall bushes that grew more than a mile on the station side of the creek; this meant that the flood was already two miles wide, which would cover the greater part of our lowest paddock.

Before evening we had got the strongest horses we could get and ploughed our way to our lower run, where, after swimming and wading across the creek, all we could find out of our 6,000 choice ewes was a small lot of 300; and, alas, other sheep from paddocks above seemed caught here and there in the high branches of the creek timber, which prepared us for further losses. The ground being like a vast bog we deferred investigation till it dried up a bit, and returned home sadder and wiser men, soaked through and glad to get a glass of grog and smoke a comforting and reflective pipe.

We soon learnt that the eastern end of Peak Downs had suffered nearly as much as our end. Lilyvale had been cleared out, and at Capella two teams and teamsters had been swept away at their camp at dead of night. Our losses at Wolfgang were found to be not far short of 15,000 sheep, and we heard of heavy losses at other stations,

such as Gordon Downs and Yamala; whilst fencing, new fencing mostly, too, had suffered enormously.

We were also very anxious to learn the fate of Clermont, my electoral town, which lay at the junction of Wolfgang with Sandy Creek, some eight miles below us, but it was some little time before news could get across. When our stockman came he brought news that carcasses of our sheep were to be seen in the tree tops along the creek, and also caught on the roofs of such houses as were left standing in Clermont, the lower portion of which had been swept clean away, having been injudiciously built between Sandy Creek and the Clermont Lagoon. The houses on the Sandy ridge beyond the Lagoon had escaped. Four or five people were missing, and stories were told of a cottage, the corner posts of which had not been sunk in the ground, waltzing down the flood with lamps alight. The editor of the local paper had passed the night, with many others, in the forks of some neighbouring trees, and had seen the ruin of his plant. Clermont had learned a lesson which I trust will be of profit to that excellent little township in its future and present building operations.

It is well to fix this flood as an historical one that may happen again in sub-tropical Queensland; for, exactly twenty years after, a similar waterspout fell in the environs of Brisbane, during which twenty-seven inches of rain fell in twenty-four hours, devastating the valley of the Brisbane and Bremer,





MARKING LAMBS, QUEENSLAND.





carrying away the great Victoria Bridge and doing the capital of Queensland an immensity of damage.

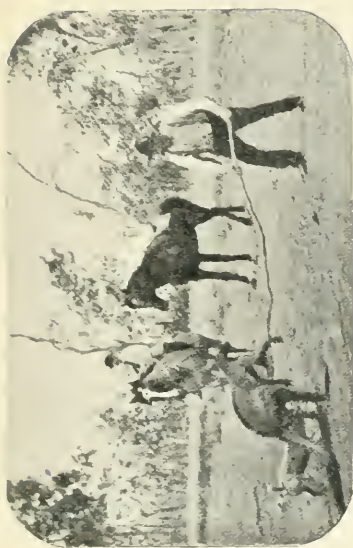
This loss of sheep coming to us so soon after the cessation of the shepherding system made old settlers reflect that the old way had its advantages, as sheep stations and sheep yards were generally put out of flood reach, and sheep in the fold were generally safe. Sheep are, it must be said, uncommonly stupid animals which will take shelter in any flooded ground provided it is timbered. After this flood we always took good care to clear the low grounds near the creeks on the approach of heavy rains. The lesson was a severe one, but then Queensland squatting is full of such, especially considering that not many weeks before we had lost over 100 sheep in a fierce bush fire that had swept one of our upper paddocks.

Our excellent partner in Sydney hearing of Clermont being swept away, and our sheep being lodged high in river gum trees, sent alarming telegrams. We were glad to reassure him and advise him he must not give in, for this flood proved the turning point of good seasons and better times. Our credit was good, so we set to work developing the rest of the run; and when our fences were ready we purchased 30,000 breeding ewes from settlers between us and the coast, who found their country better adapted for cattle than sheep. These sheep we got very cheap, and putting them to good rams, and having a run of rattling good seasons, we soon

got into numbers, so that after judicious culling we were able to deliver 110,000 good sheep with Wolfgang when we sold it in 1875.

The price pastoralists obtained for wool in the first half of the seventies, together with current seasons, were excellent, and had these been maintained we should have all become wealthy men. I recollect shearing a clip of seven pounds per sheep over all at Wolfgang and getting a shilling a pound in the grease for it, and also selling wethers half fleeced at nine shillings a head for the Darling Downs market. This was in 1873.

At this time Peak Downs presented an attractive residence for a squatter. If the summers were hot the winters were delightful, and as everything was progressing and the returns good, a man felt in good heart with himself. The scenery was never monotonous as long as you were in sight of Peak Range, and there was always plenty of work in laying out new paddocks, fixing the site of new wells, and ever and anon when these were bottomed watching the last blasts of our clever well-sinker, Marshall, when he had struck water on the rock and the last shot had to be fired upon which the success of the flow of water greatly depended. We built good huts and good horse paddocks for our boundary riders, and generally arranged that they should work together at mustering time, so that on open country like Peak Downs one could work a big property with wonderfully few hands. The



KANGAROO HUNTING, FROM "DALGETY'S REVIEW."



Peak Downs was excellent wool-growing country, and remains so still ; much of it has been converted into freehold, and that is partly in the hands of selectors who combine agriculture with grazing, but it is mostly owned by the lessees of the original stations, who were able to purchase the pick of their land at a very reasonable rate.

We had made a good out-station in a picturesque spot under Table Mountain, and often spent Sunday there resting from the week's work, taking with us generally a visitor or two to hunt the kangaroo with some excellent dogs I had bred and secured. Joe Conway was the chief whip on these occasions, and many's the fight we have had with gigantic old men kangaroo and also the wallaroo, a black and more thick-set mountain kangaroo that was tougher to kill. The riding, owing to the rocky nature of the country, was pretty rough, but we had a lot of handy horses that went nose to the ground like greyhounds after their prey. My eldest brother I recollect paid us a visit about this time, and, being a famous hunter, we had a week's camp at Table Creek, which nearly ended disastrously, as his horse being blown fell in a stony gully in one of our chases, and he gave himself a severe strain, so severe indeed that it was not until we had sent for Dr. Taylor, our Clermont medico, that we knew for certain that he had not broken his thigh. He had to be carried home in great pain, and it was a month before he was fit to travel. The doctor, who is now

an honoured member of the Legislative Council in Brisbane, did a wonderful ride from Clermont to Table Mountain, and the horses he used were not much good after. He was so rejoiced at the upshot of his visit that, being of a sporting nature, he left his patient for a bit and had a turn after the kangaroo with fresh horses, notwithstanding his journey of 30 miles. Good old days, when our world was young.

Kangaroo hunting is an art. If the dogs are staunch and not tired, and don't require continual encouragement to follow up their quarry, they will so press the game that, like a boomerang, the kangaroo will return to the spot he started from and be often killed within a short distance of his lair. An "old man" won't gallop far, but the yearling ones, so-called flyers, will generally give the fleetest dog a great chase and often best him.

I had a visit from a gay travelling barrister, George B. Hudson (now M.P. for West Hertfordshire), about this time, that left a pleasant impression on all concerned; witty and good humoured, he thoroughly enjoyed the knocking about, and being an excellent taxidermist he was often busy recruiting and curing his specimens of birds. One day we brought him back an emu, and tried to persuade him it was a large specimen of the bustard, which grew to a wonderful size on Peak Downs, but it wouldn't do, and we had a hearty laugh over it. He got a little touch of fever and ague, but soon



shook it off, and we often now when we meet in England talk of the Brisbane Club and the trip to Wolfang that followed our first meeting there in the days of our youth.

Talking of emus and the rate they can trot at, Peak Downs was full of them, and I once for a bet ran my horse "Canary," a very speedy chestnut, alongside a big male bird, took him by the neck, dragged him for a few yards and let him go. So that is quite possible on a level plain. There is no more inoffensive bird or a more picturesque one than the emu, and I do not think beyond taking the eggs occasionally for ornamental purposes they are ever interfered with. They yield oil that is held by old bush hands as a sovereign remedy for stiff joints or rheumatism, and many and many a hut has its bottle of emu oil hanging by the chimney; this oil has the faculty of oozing out of the glass, so permeating and incisive are its powers. The flesh of the emu is like veal and not at all bad eating. My friend, P. F. Macdonald, of Yaamba, captured one on the Nogoia in 1860, when he was in the direst straits for want of rations; it saved him and his mate, and so he adopted it as his crest. Alas for Australian explorers and pioneers generally, their crest has been oftener a drooping one, and few like P. F. Macdonald have lived to reap substantial reward from the taking up of country in early Queensland days.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### WESTWARD HO.

IN 1872 Mr. Roderick Travers, of Peak Downs, had purchased from Messrs. Rule and Lacy the lower half of their Aramac Creek Run, the Aramac being noted as a well-watered creek, running through rich mitchell grass plains, and equal to anything on the Barcoo, Aramac Creek being one of the heads of the Thompson River, which runs parallel to the far-famed Barcoo, watering perhaps the richest pastoral country in Australia, if not in the world. Aramac township had just been formed, a mile from the head station, which lay 180 miles west from Peak Downs, most of the country between these districts after leaving the Belyando being spinifex and so called "desert" country, some of it growing also a poison bush, that often played havoc with travelling sheep if they cropped it when hungry.

A gallant and determined Scotchman, Willie Forsyth by name, was Messrs. Travers and Gibson's manager at the Aramac, and under his charge the development of that property was rapid though costly, the prices for wool and sheep at that time perhaps warranting

the venture ; but the long distance from port for rations, wire and so forth, together with heavy wool rates down to Rockhampton, made a heavy charge against profits. Wages ruled high also at this time and for a long time after, no man, whatever his job might be, taking less than 30s. a week, whilst bullock and horse drivers asked and obtained from 40s. to 50s. coupled with rations, which meant 10s. a week more.

However, the yarns we heard on Peak Downs of the magnificence of the Aramac country, with its wide and fattening plains and the booming bullocks and wethers that one occasionally saw from that country, fatter by far than any the Peak Downs could produce, as well perhaps as the sleek condition of Forsyth's horses when he came down to see his principal on Peak Downs, inspired me with a strong desire to secure if possible a slice of that land of promise, before it was all gone in the rush from the south that was being made by Victorian speculators ; so I was not sorry when my old Rugby schoolfellow, Dyson Lacy, a partner of Rule and Lacy, pulled up his horses at Wolfgang one fine evening and told me in the course of a long yarn, after supper over our pipes, that he was willing to sell the remaining part of the Aramac run, which he thought was quite as good as the part Travers had purchased. Our firm not being prepared for such a purchase at the moment, I was able to secure it for my eldest brother, who

was looking out for a property at the time, and he after a short lapse of time resold it to our firm. The price Rule and Lacy asked and obtained for the upper part of the Aramac, with about 500 square miles of country, was equal to a pound a head for 13,000 sheep. There were but few improvements, only a few yards and paddock and one or two huts, so there was everything to make.

It was not long before I went up to take delivery of the property, driving by Surbiton, thence over the low ranges that divide the Belyando waters (which are those of the Suttor and Burdekin, or Eastern waters) from the Western waters of the Thompson joining on to the Barcoo, forming Cooper's Creek, and eventually flowing into Lake Eyre in South Australia. This huge Western watershed embraces hundreds of miles of undulating plains, and may be called the erstwhile field of promise to many an Australian explorer; it is now consecrated to the development of a gigantic pastoral industry, which a woman, plucky Miss Flora Shaw, the travelling correspondent of the great English *Times*, has perhaps better described and summarised in her letters from Queensland, Nos. IV. and V., than any other writer before or since.

The characteristics of the far west, its boundless extent, its sea-like plains, the monotony of rich pasture with so few watercourses to accentuate it, are they not written in the heart and soul of many a plucky adventurer who either has made his pile

or lost his little all in the varied fortunes that good or bad seasons, or bad and good times, have brought him? The rich deep soil cannot fly away, and there it must remain, to carry in years to come a simple, sturdy, healthy population. Whatever it becomes that must be on a large scale, for there is no smallness in it. There are no savage races to conquer and dispossess, it is a kingdom of peace and can be made one of peace and plenty. What it might have remained had not the discovery of artesian water some dozen years ago brought a fresh value to a great portion of this vast area one cannot tell; but, having secured the element hitherto most valued and most scarce in Central and Western Queensland, the future is assured and it cannot be a failure. Population not too hurriedly tempted thereon, light railways, and industrious producers free from political ambitions, must end in making it a great though certainly not a picturesque country.

It may be further, with justice, added that the climate of the great plains of Western Queensland, the great summer heat notwithstanding, is essentially a healthy one; and that with hard work, plain fare, and dry air, the debilitated constitution is often restored, and in the winter months the weak are often made strong by the open air life that is the very essence of squatting in Western Queensland.

## CHAPTER XX.

### COREENA AND THE WEST.

WE christened the upper Aramac country Coreena, one of the blocks being so named, and I experienced the same special pleasure in discovering its resources and capabilities as I had felt in exploring many a former piece of new country. The daily expeditions and camps on new and unstocked country, when that country is good, sets the pastoral brain at work, as you are always hoping to discover something better; and here, barring some scrubby country on the east boundary, it was all very good, and an experienced eye took in at once the variety of edible grasses and bushes with which the western country is blessed. The creeks had hardly any fall, and the main creek had some splendid waterholes which abounded in fish and wild fowl; whilst the open downs had plenty of shelter in the boree, which resembles the mayall of the south, studding as it did the fringes of all the watercourses, of which, after the main creek, Politic Creek was the most important.

I have seen a good deal of pastoral country in

my day, but a better "lay" of it than the watersheds of Politic Creek I have never come across. Dreading the cost of carriage for sheep we shifted the Coreena sheep to Wolfgang and sent the Wolfgang cattle to Coreena, where we let them breed up for a few years, after which, yielding to the general rush after wool producing country and spurred up by the success of neighbours, we turned it into a sheep station after sending its cattle to a piece of country we had secured in the far west. The first lot of bullocks we sent off Coreena went to Adelaide, about 1,000 miles, and fetched £8 per head; for cattle were then worth breeding and the Barcoo country could "top up" bullocks to travel 1,000 miles over good country and still be good butcher's meat at the end of the journey. Of course, the droving expenses were heavy, and later on, when the price of cattle fell, cattle breeding became almost profitless and sheep took their place.

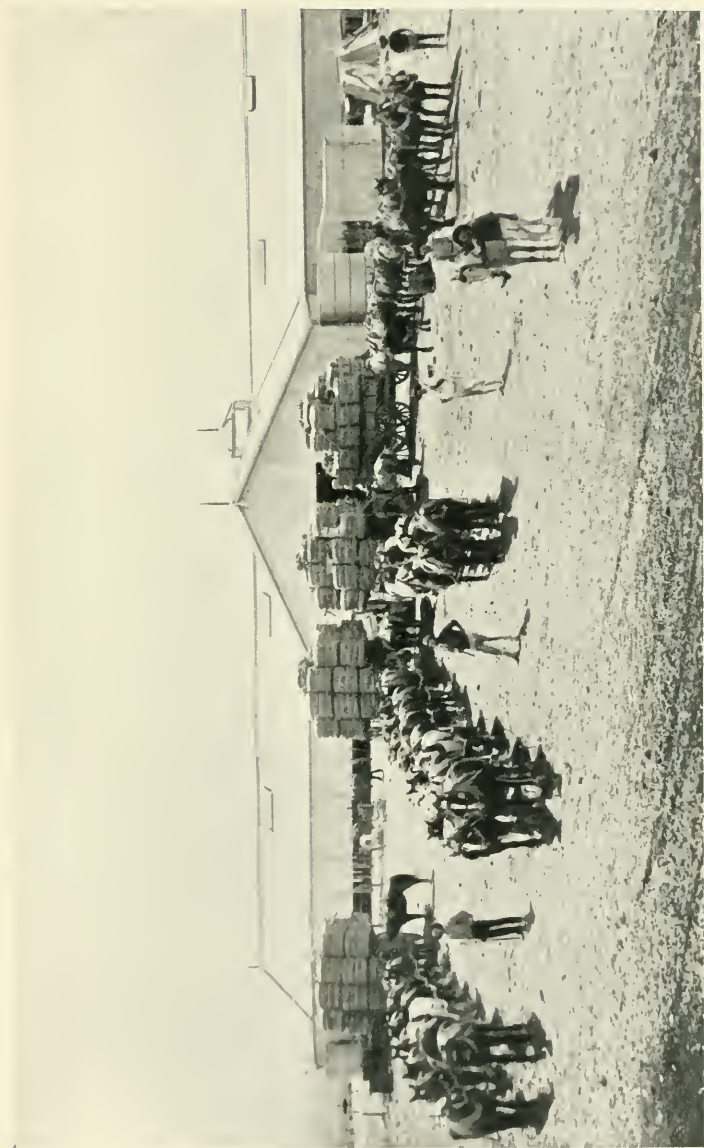
Meantime there was a bigger pastoral rush to the great West, comprised in the districts of Mitchell, Gregory North and South, and Burke, than had ever yet taken place in the history of Queensland. Wealthy Victorians such as Sir Francis Murphy and Sons, George Fairbairn and Sons, the Govetts and many others, and such Queenslanders as the Wienholts and Taylors, and Romes, also pastoral companies such as the Scottish Australian Investment, the Darling Downs Land and Western Company,



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and others, flocked out to the new pastures then favoured by good seasons.

This settlement of the Western country gave a rare good chance to teamsters, and a good many honest little fortunes were made by contractors for the carriage of these large stations. There is no money more honestly earned than that saved by the nomadic carrier, who has to face at times both drought and flood and is responsible for valuable property in all kinds of seasons. Most of them know how to make themselves fairly comfortable, however, often travelling with their wives and families, who drive the spare bullocks and horses, and on occasions I have seen a good milch cow form part of the equipment where there was a young family in question. Carriers are proverbially hospitable, and a pot of tea with a slice from the big damper and highly-corned beef is spontaneously offered in all cases to the less fortunate traveller. Successful carriers in my mind form the backbone of Queensland selectors; their money has been hardly earned and the squatter has never grudged it; they know how to invest it, and a bad season doesn't cow them. Carriage by teams is an industry which railways won't altogether displace, for there is the traffic from side distances and places beyond the reach of railroads, so that the working bullock and draught horse are always likely to remain a portion of the stock-in-trade of both old and new Queensland.



SALTEN CREEK WOOLSHED AND TEAMS, QUEENSLAND.



I was anxious to push my work at Coreena in earnest, of which the most important part was ascertaining the boundaries of the run and settling them with your neighbours, as oftentimes it is found that neglect in so doing at the start means disputes and often law suits hereafter. For the country looked upon at first sometimes as of little value becomes precious when it is stocked; and big as these western runs were, the true old squatter, being rather greedy for good country, was ever ready to fight for it if he thinks he is going to lose it.

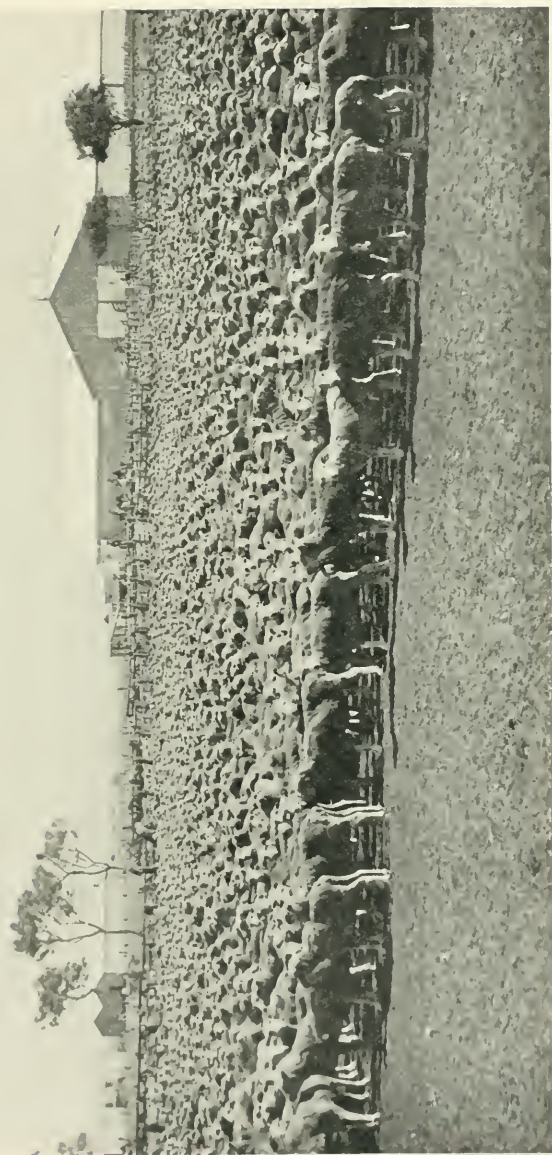
I started some good teams to Coreena with a few of my old bushmen from Peak Downs who were anxious to link their fortunes with those of the new venture, in fencing, dam-making, &c., and of course there is a lot in knowing your contractors and being able to trust them. I found the Crombies as neighbours at Barcaldine, and Simpson was just starting the first improvements for my old friends the Wienholts at Saltern, which is perhaps now the most highly-improved station on the Mitchell, whilst of course at Aramac I had a good friend and neighbour in Forsyth, who might be then said to "boss" the neighbourhood. McWhanell was also a good man at Rodney Downs, whilst further afield you came to the grand property selected by Walker for the Scottish Australian Investment Company, the cattle station being Mount Cornish and the sheep property Bowen Downs, the cattle being under the charge of Robert Edkins, than whom, perhaps, Queensland

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will never see a more capable cattle manager ; Ker looked after the incipient flock at Bowen Downs.

So I started at Coreena with a lot of good neighbours, being men who knew what they were about. The only drawbacks were high wages and long carriage, though, as I have said before, all would have gone well had wool and sheep prices kept up.

Soon after the development of the Aramac country we got a coach service from Clermont to Aramac, and many a trip I took on Cobb's coach when it wasn't convenient to take my own buggy. These trips were often wet or dry ; in the former case we had to walk over long distances of boggy ground, every now and then having to lever out the coach that had sunk to its axles. The shades of evening sometimes overtook us, and an impromptu camp had to be made without food and with many a mosquito as companion. There would be generally a glass of grog, however, to be had from one or other of the passengers whose provision lay in that direction. There are no harder worked men than Cobb and Co.'s drivers in the outside districts of Queensland, as they often have to drive with half-broken horses over half-made tracks, cutting in and out of the bush with nerve and wrists of iron. Most of the country between Clermont and Aramac was bad driving and required great skill ; the great point was an early start, especially in the hot summer months, when the heat and flies of the noontide hour became specially aggravating to man and beast.



SALTERN CREEK (SHORN SHEEP), QUEENSLAND.





What is so striking in Western Queensland are the vast distances to be surmounted as a means to an end of either business or pleasure. If a squatter wants to consult his neighbour, a ride of five-and-twenty miles is nothing. The doctor may be thirty miles away, and your township and the Court of Petty Sessions you are required, perhaps, to preside at is often the same distance; everything is on a vast scale, and brings with it a burden of physical work that is only fit for the young and the strong. Look at the long silent rides of the sheep overseer or the boundary rider; the former may and often has a round of fifty miles to make before he returns to his camp, and the latter may have half that distance of wire fencing to examine critically and sometimes strain it up here and there where loose. Verily the new generation of Queensland will hail the closer settlement that under railways is undoubtedly before that prosperous Colony, but it must be a work of time, and there must be no enchantment undergone that is followed by disenchantment, as has so often been the case, financially, pastorally, agriculturally, and in the way of mining, in almost all the colonies. Safe bind safe find; never incur a debt there is no absolute prospect of paying off, never take up country you see no immediate prospect of developing, never buy more land than you can plough, and never invest in a mine with your bottom dollar, are golden rules specially applicable to Queensland.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### FAREWELL TO PEAK DOWNS.

THE year 1875, that followed our acquisition of Coreena in the then far west, was a year of movement in Queensland pastoral affairs, the natural sequence of complete recovery from financial pressure, and a return to high prices for wool and consequently for sheep, which were bound to keep high with so much western country to stock. So when I went down to my sessional work early in May of that year I found the leading firms of stock and station agents in Brisbane doing a good business, and it was not long before my indefatigable friend William Forrest had felt my pulse regarding the sale of our Wolfgang property, which after three good years was in excellent condition to offer. Of course our Sydney partner had to be consulted, and after a good deal of palaver and correspondence, towards the middle of August, and after I had started my shearing on return to the station, a sale on satisfactory terms was concluded to Messrs. Coldham, Cochrane and Hislop, of Melbourne, at the price of a pound a head for something over 100,000 sheep, "everything given in."

## *FAREWELL TO PEAK DOWNS.*

Wolfgang had been an instance of continuous progress. We had some difficulty in 1861 to carry a flock of sheep there for want of natural water, but we gradually and steadily developed it by sinking good wells which ranged from 30 to 100ft. in depth, and with these and the country divided into a number of fair-sized paddocks we had no difficulty in running over 100,000 sheep on about 180,000 acres of black soil land; and though the Peak Downs country did not fatten as well as the Barcoo it was real good sheep country all the same, and I presume and understand it is so to this day. We had bred over 100,000 lambs in the last three years, and that had enabled us to cull our sheep thoroughly, and they were a good even flock, the Rosenthal German Merino blood having done us good service.

Time spent in the sheep drafting yards is never regretted, though in these days of big flocks and financial speculation I am afraid the great individual care of the old days is not practised, and for big lots of sheep the "swing gate" is more in use than the "handling" system. Often have we returned from our drafting yards hungry and dusty to take our mid-day meal, tasting more sheep dust than anything else in what we ate, but there was the comfortable consciousness that our flock was improving by the rigid culling of the bare-bellied and wiry-woolled, and one felt sure that a few ounces more weight of wool every shearing meant

an eventual prize in the great pastoral lottery. This work was pleasant also if it meant getting you out of debt, for it has ever been an unpleasant job working "the dead horse," as it was called later on when the fall in wool and consequently in sheep, and the fall in tallow and hides and consequently in cattle, made squatting from the eighties to the period of my writing a dreary and heavy task, instead of the brisk, lightsome work that it used to be in Queensland's early pastoral days of thirty years ago.

We sheared our last clip at Wolfgang in July and August, 1875, and by 30th September I had handed over this fine property without a hitch to the new managing partner, Mr. Hislop, who had expressed himself more than satisfied with the property and the bargain they had got. It certainly was delivered to him in first-rate working order, and if the kangaroos and the selectors could have been kept away Wolfgang was quite a squatter's paradise.

I certainly felt a pang at parting with it, and turning my back on this fine district, which I had worked hard in for over fourteen years and represented in Parliament for the best part of that period, which had been one of continual development in all respects. I had stocked and taken up the greatest portion of it in 1861 when it was unstocked and unimproved, and I was leaving it mostly fenced and watered, and with nearly half-a-million of sheep upon it. I was also leaving a lot of real good

## *FAREWELL TO PEAK DOWNS.*

neighbours in such men as Donald Wallace of Logan Downs, Devereux of Huntly, John Burn of Retro, Turnbull of Peak Downs, William Kilgour of Gordon Downs, Elliott of Langton, and also a lot of good friends in and around Clermont and Copperfield, who had always backed me during the elections; such as William Woodhouse, Robert MacMaster, A. B. Macdonald, and Andrew Small, some of whom are leading men there still, whilst others have gone the way of all flesh. I took a final round of my old district with many a promise expressed to revisit it later on.

After saying good-bye to Peak Downs and settling the management of Coreena chiefly as a cattle station for the present, and laying out some necessary improvements there against the time we should require to stock it up with sheep, I came to the conclusion that it would be most prudent to wait a year or two for this development, also that if I ever intended to return to Europe I should try and do so during that period. So I arranged, after a trip to Sydney, to get away to England after the session of 1876.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### HOMeward BOUND AND OLD ENGLAND AGAIN.

I MADE a start for Europe in December, 1876, from Melbourne with my partner's son, taking our passage in the P. and O. ss. *Tanjore*, commanded by that most charming of captains, Julius Orman. As we steamed out of Hobson's Bay I could hardly realise that I was leaving the shores upon which I had landed a fresh-coloured youth twenty-four years before. The suns of Queensland and the pioneering of Peak Downs had left their traces in the sober individual who paced the deck of the P. and O. liner, drinking in the fresh sea breeze which travellers across the great Australian Bight are wont to receive in occasionally strong doses. We had some charming Victorians of leading families aboard, and found ourselves very comfortable bar the rolling; the *Tanjore* being overmasted, and once set rolling resembled a pendulum in her action.

It was not long before a number of kindred spirits arranged to avail themselves of the option of extending our tour to Bombay after touching at

Point de Galle, which was the point of call at Ceylon in those days. This would give us a fortnight in India, and as we were travelling more for pleasure than business in those days this arrangement suited most of us. At Point de Galle we had a couple of days to acquaint ourselves with the tropical beauties of Ceylon, a land which is never visited without interest, especially by the somewhat drought-stricken Australian, and thence went on to Bombay, spending a cheerful Christmas on board, the first and only one it has been my lot to spend aboard ship. Our fortnight at Bombay was employed in pleasant excursions to Matheran, Poonah, &c., organising successful moonlight jaunts that long dwelt in my memory, our party of about twelve being always merry, open-handed and in good humour, as befits Australians on a holiday.

During this period, which covered the new year of 1877, Lord Beaconsfield's great Imperial Proclamation was being carried out at Delhi, where Her Majesty was named Empress of India amidst surroundings of the greatest splendour. I recollect the glow of enthusiasm and pride that filled our Australian hearts at the thought that a handful of our white countrymen should hold the sway over the dusky millions of India, when these few, as we could judge from the teeming population of Bombay, could hardly be noticed in point of number. I recollect the great Durbar rejoicings at Delhi being saddened by a polo accident which caused the death



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of a promising officer whose name I have now forgotten.

The *Siam*, a somewhat newer P. and O. liner than the *Tanjore*, took us from Bombay to Brindisi, and we were soon made aware that evening dress and smart toilettes would be *de rigueur* in the evening, for we had on board some of the belles of the court of Lord Lytton. The evenings were pleasantly spent in listening to the supremely good singing of some of the passengers, which enabled us to make light of the Persian Gulf and its dreary heat.

I remember speaking to the engineer of the *Siam* about what he thought the shortest time that the Australian voyage from Brindisi to Albany was ever likely to be done in our time. He replied twenty-seven days; and I note that we have lately arrived at about that rate of speed in the new vessels of the P. and O., and, indeed, other lines too. The oft-dreaded Red Sea treated us not unfairly, and we landed at Suez. There was no Suez Canal opened in those days. Not unwilling to tackle the desert route by railroad to Alexandria, we had a cool, though dusty, railway journey across, the sharp, clear air of Egypt in January reminding me of that you so often get in the winter months of Western Queensland.

Our journey across from Alexandria to Brindisi was without incident, and I was glad to land there and feel myself once more in Europe. I had made friends with the chief of the Customs at Calcutta, an Indian civilian to whom I became indebted for a

great deal of solid information about India, and we agreed to travel to Naples together, which we did after seeing most of our friends off by the overland mail to London.

Next day we skirted the shores of the lovely Adriatic to Bari, thence turning off to Naples, where we arrived on a lovely moonlight night too late to see its beauties. Our hotel faced the bay, and I shall long remember opening the windows of my room facing the Chiaya to gaze on Vesuvius and its thin crest of smoke. The blue Mediterranean fairly danced in the gay sunshine, the music of street organs for once did not shock the ear, and one felt at last in a land of pleasure where hard work and business were secondary considerations. My friend and I took an early cup of *café au lait* and sallied forth to smoke a morning cigarette in the splendid sunshine, everything new, everything fresh, everything picturesque.

Naples has been described by abler pens than mine; twenty years ago it lacked a good deal of the cleansing and draining process which I understand it has since happily received. We made our excursions by carriage to Pompei and other attractive spots and we finally passed many an hour in that wonderful museum, where you can trace the dynasty of the Cæsars, and gaze upon features which reflect both victory and passion, to say nothing of the monuments of Roman everyday life. Would that that museum were more accessible to

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the students of England and Australia, for the Isles of Britain in days of yore were not too far for Roman conquest, and many an Englishman derives the force of character that has enabled him to colonise with success, not only from a possible but a probable Roman descent.

Naples gave me a zest to see eternal Rome, Florence and Genoa ; so I determined to spend the spring in Italy and thus avoid the too rigorous climate of England. My friend, who, lucky fellow, had inherited a Scottish estate, left me at Naples, but I had always the companionship of my partner's son, who was an excellent specimen of Australian growth. My sister came from England to join me, and could hardly recollect the Rugby boy in the seasoned Queenslander that she came to meet in Italy.

Rome gave us the unalloyed classical pleasure it ever gives to those who escape the Roman fever and are not kept short of time and means to enjoy its endless treasures of the past, and to Australians, as to Americans, it will ever have special charms in that making of history which they somewhat lack. After spending a busy fortnight we visited Florence, where we found the weather pretty cold ; we there saw occasionally the ill-fated heir of the Napoleons, who was destined some years later to sacrifice his life on the English altar of conquest in South Africa.

Receiving an invitation from my brother to

visit him at his villa near Genoa, I managed to spend a month with him, which I thoroughly enjoyed. We made excursions from the Villa Carmagnola, near Pegli, to Genoa, Milan, Savona and the Riviera generally, and not being pushed for time I had a good opportunity of investigating the contents of many a Genoese palazzo, that breathed of the glorious days when Genoa divided with Venice the supremacy of the Mediterranean. Nothing was more soothing after a hard matter of fact life in Australia, than to revel in the rest and repose of cultured Italy, and slake one's thirst for sentiment and colour at the many founts that abound in this land of past glories. After seeing galleries I was glad to stroll out at Genoa in the gardens of the Aqua Sola.

It will take some time, but it is not unlikely that Port Jackson will some day gather to its lovely shores some sentiment of romance not unlike that of Italian seas; some time after I spent an afternoon at Mr. Bloxome's villa, on the north shore of Sydney Harbour, looking at sea pieces painted by the masterly hand of Oswald Brierley, that in adjuncts of sea and sky reminded me a good deal of the Gulf of Genoa, and was quite its equal in winter beauty.

From Genoa I made my way by the Eastern Pyrenees, whence our family sprang, there to renew the recollections of my early boyhood, and so on to Paris, to spend a good time in the city

where one is never dull. I had not been there since I was a very little boy, having passed through it after the terrible days of June, 1848, when Cavaignac saved Paris from mob rule and the Faubourg St. Antoine, together with other parts of Paris I was then shown, had been riddled with bullets. We had then, I recollect, stopped at the Hotel du Rhin, where Louis Napoleon, a claimant for the Presidential Chair, which he filled later on, was also staying. From the windows of the hotel we saw the great "Fête de la Concorde," when 100,000 troops of "l'armée de Paris" defiled in victorious and imposing strength to the air of the "Marseillaise," my young eyes being dazzled with the incessant glitter of uniforms and bayonets.

The chief alteration I noticed in London, after my absence of twenty-four years, was in the neighbourhood of Northumberland Avenue, the great town house of the Percys having given way to a series of huge hotels that dispense to colonists and Americans an hospitality of much greater pretension than that of a quarter of a century ago. However, I contented myself with rooms in Duke Street, from which I could pay some of those many visits an Australian with good English connections is ever asked to pay. I shall always recollect the kindness of good friends, amongst other attentions receiving an invitation to the honorary membership of the Travellers' Club through my friend Ridley Smith's father. I was

much struck with Hyde Park and the gathering of the fashionable world ; but that kind of thing soon palls. What I enjoyed most were country visits, for there is nothing in the world equal to the life and habits, in my mind, of a well-appointed English country house.

I have my diary of this beautiful English summer before me, and find that like all returned Australians I was cutting about all over England visiting relations and friends, renewing acquaintance with the scenes of my boyhood and taking my fill of leafy lanes and hill and dale, which ever render the country life of England in summer so unique and delightful. Of course, an Australian is struck with the delicate verdure of an English spring, and still more so with that deeper green which the summer brings, but he wonders why that leafy foliage has been denied him in Australia, where the everlasting gum tree and its spiral leaves give him such scanty shade. It was delightful after long years to mark once again the dense population, the villages and towns at every turn, the rosy children, and the air of content and repose so different to Australian restlessness.

Of course, my eye, accustomed to live stock, readily took in the condition of the cattle and sheep browsing the rich green food and fattening without an effort of their own ; so different to our country where stock has to march for its living a very uncertain and often considerable distance. It is, of



course, the secret of the succulence and tenderness of the home-grown meat that it is reared without having to travel for its food, the live stock in England being brought up in their, to us, infinitesimal enclosures, feeding on the green herbage that a certain rainfall never ceases to keep tender. Where after all can the traveller match the fertility of old England in its summer months? And how sweet that lingering twilight to the returned traveller from a land where the sun sets suddenly as if ashamed of its dangerous vigour!

Amongst other visits I was glad to be asked to spend a day or two with Sir George Walker of Castleton, near Newport, who took me to look over Mr. R. Stratton's celebrated herd of shorthorns near there, a most instructive and enjoyable day, everything good, especially a champion heifer, and the great bull "Protector," which were worth going a long way to see. I also enjoyed being shown over Tredegar, the seat of those kings of South Wales, the sporting Morgans; there I made my first acquaintance with hunting stables on a large scale, both Lord Tredegar, who had ridden in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, and his brother, the Hon. Fred Morgan, being *nulli secundus* in the hunting field. Everything at Tredegar was old-fashioned and solid, and had not apparently fallen into any enervating luxury.

At the time I paid a visit to Mr. Stratton's stud farm, there were good prices still going with



Australian breeders for highly bred shorthorns. It is a pity that since these days cattle in Queensland, and indeed in Australia, have become woefully unremunerative, and that English breeders of shorthorns or Herefords have to turn to America generally and Argentina in particular to get a liberal market for their stock. I am afraid Australian herds must deteriorate unless a fillip comes to make us all once more take pride and pleasure in our herds. The tick and the quarantine it has brought with it, of which more anon, have a good deal to answer for, but that Queensland is destined to be the special habitat of well-bred cattle, the excellence and wide-spread nature of its cattle country certainly points to.

The same slack time of depression, except perhaps in regard to racehorses, has reached the value of Australian horse stock, these having fallen so woefully in the past twenty-five years, that the price for hacks, which in old days was a good five-and-twenty pounds, has now come down to the modest fiver. The returned Australian is always struck with the super-excellence of the London omnibus horses, a particular breed unmatched in its way for its bone and substance; also with that of the great hunting stock that furnish an animal bred to provide speed and safety for the well-to-do class who take their winter pleasure in the sport of fox-hunting. Still, I believe that with strict attention to proper mating an almost equally good animal can be bred in Australia, if we could depend upon a

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certain market in England, India or South Africa. There is many a well-bred colt of fashion and good shape sold in the Melbourne yards for £10, which would be worth £50 in London. India, no doubt, takes a good few of our best "Walers," still the trade is incomplete and unsatisfactory. We have got the winterless climate and the blood and the natural food, we only want the market. Provision for the cavalry remounts of Europe should also more earnestly occupy the attention of Australian breeders.

Australian draught stock, at any rate in Queensland, has fared no better, and that through no want of enterprise on the part of breeders; for such studs as Maryvale and Fassifern have for over a quarter of a century imported fresh blood of the Clydesdale and Shire breeds from the best sources procurable in Great Britain. To these fine Queensland studs we used to go from the west and north for our stud colts, and they have figured as champions on many a Queensland show ground, but now prices have fallen one half, notwithstanding the fact that on the roads the nimbler draught horse is replacing the slower working bullock, and that for all earth work and dam making draught horses are in constant use.

As far as racehorses go Australia may be content with the stimulus lately given to breeding racehorses in Australia by the sale of the great "Carbine" to the Duke of Portland, followed by the migration of "Trenton" and others, to say

nothing of the Australian horses in training bought by good judges in England. The fashion has, apparently, set in; there must be something in it, and if the sires of Australia are in demand, the dams will surely follow.

I had missed the Derby, but did not neglect Ascot and Goodwood, at the first feasting my eyes on the world of fashion. Of the horses, I admired most "Skylark" and "Springfield," the latter being unconquerable over short distances, qualities which he has transmitted to his stock. Then, on the hottest of summer days, when muslin and gauze seemed the order of the day, the handsome "Petrarch" won the Cup hands down. How I did enjoy in the saddling paddock, this, my first study of the make and shape of a great English racehorse! It was a revelation to me.

Ducal Goodwood followed later on, and for shade and midsummer surroundings it put all other race-courses I had seen out of conceit; for Australian courses are prone to be bare and unshady, and the tracks often sandy instead of the elastic turf. I saw "Herald" win the Stewards' Cup, and later on, witnessed the success of the whilom hurdle-racer "Hampton" in the Goodwood Cup, sealing thereby his subsequent good fortune at the stud. They said he had been over hurdles, but he looked well bred enough for anything. The racing otherwise was poor, and it seemed more a gathering of society to celebrate the wane of the season, and

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say good-bye till they met again at country houses, than the eager struggle of the racing business I had witnessed at Flemington and Randwick.

I have had a great fondness for Australian country racing, and once indulged in it on a small scale in Central Queensland, where I was fairly successful, but, of course, it was a difficult thing to know there when a horse not thorough bred was properly trained. My first idea of English racehorses led me to think they were overtrained, so lazily and languidly did they move about compared to Australian country cocktails; of course, in most cases I must have been wrong. Some horses will do with half the training of others, and there can be no uniform rule applying to all horses. In a hot climate we used to work our nags at earliest dawn; I suppose in England they are galloped at all hours. One thing we must all agree about, and that is that there is the one day, and, indeed, the one hour, at which a horse in training is at its best, and that the secret of success is that he should make his venture at that supreme moment.

Later on, I got an order to see the Queen's stud at Hampton Court, which I much enjoyed. Amongst the mares I saw "Viridis," the dam of "Springfield," and amongst the stallions, there were "Pall Mall," "St. Albans," and that king of the T.Y.C., the robust "Prince Charlie," all in tip-top order, as one may imagine.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### BACK TO AUSTRALIA.

WITH the English autumn came my resolution to return to Australia and look after the stocking up of Coreena in person. I had had a good time in England and had tired of doing nothing and was anxious to get to work again. There were the usual adieux to friends new and old, and the packing up of the new fit-outs Australians always think they require at the hands of English tailors. I had taken my passage *viâ* Brindisi, where I caught the P. and O. *Ceylon* with my friend Orman again as captain. We had a hot trip across to Alexandria, picking up the crowded *Poonah* at Suez, where we entered upon, though it was early in October, the hottest trip that old ship was said ever to have made through the Red Sea. There was no breeze to speak of, and the ship was not a fast one; the sea looked like molten lead and the sun rose of a morning like a ball of fire, the supply of ice turned out insufficient, and we were right glad to make Aden and get out of the worst of the heat. We had a mixed lot of passengers and an incongruous

one as far as Galle:—An Australian Governor and his suite, an Admiral and officers going to China, some rather rough Calcutta pilots, a comedy troupe going to the same place, and last, but not least, a corps de ballet difficult to repress. It was too hot for so many “factions,” and we were right glad to separate at Galle; some for Bombay, some for Calcutta, some for China, and the rest for Australia.

Who can deny that a P. and O. voyage is an introduction in itself to “all sorts and conditions of men”?—for here we had men in high places, polished sailors, celebrated actors, lucky miners, to say nothing of occasional adventurers and adventuresses, all mingling together and bound by the courtesies of ship-board, though never likely to meet again, to exchange thoughts and ideas.

At Galle—and who does not recollect its ramparts, often the scene of many a farewell between passengers who there divide their ways?—we got the rolling old *Tanjore* again, and, starting with a head wind and fresh sea, bade fair to make a long trip to King George’s Sound. This long stretch of ocean is the dreariest portion of the trip between England and Australia, but I made the best of it. I had a good cabin to myself and that next to Captain Almond, a valued P. and O. commander, who was going to Adelaide, deputed to investigate the mysterious robbery of 5,000

sovereigns there some time before. Almond and I always took our early tea together, and many were the instructive yarns I had with him dating back to his early travels in Japan, where the P. and O. had sent him hunting for coal deposits. Almond suffered a bit from his sight, but I understand he is still to the fore in the responsible employment of this great company.

At King George's Sound I said good-bye to Governor Ord and his wife and their stalwart son their society had been most pleasant. This was before the golden but speculative days that have since played havoc with the repose of the then placid West Australia. At Melbourne I exchanged to the *Avoca*, in which we had a rough passage to Sydney, where once again I was received by my partner at Elamang with his wonted cordiality and hospitality. The squatting news was good, the season in Queensland being in every way promising, with much movement going on in pastoral circles.

From Sydney I paid a visit by rail to Kirkconnel, my partner's country house in the Blue Mountains, beyond Mt. Victoria, where at an altitude of over 3,000 feet the temperature is nearly as perfect as anyone could wish it, and where English fruits are readily grown. From there to Bathurst, the "city of the plains," is an easy drive, and I extended my visit to Mildura, George's Plains. I then went on to pay a short visit to some old



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Peak Downs friends near Orange, who took me an expedition up the Canobolas Mountain, whence I had a fine view of the country round Orange, which should be reckoned one of the gardens of N.S.W. The sight of this valley of the Macquarie carries one back to the old days of N.S.W. settlement, when the intrepid pioneers Wentworth, Blaxland and Lawson, gazed for the first time, in 1813, on this land of promise from one of the highest spurs of the broken mountain mass that forms the "Blue Mountains," these being now traversed by an ingenious railway, of which the descent into the plains of the Macquarie is the far-famed "zig-zag," which is quite an engineering *tour de force*.

Before the end of the year it was necessary that I should go up to Brisbane and look into a number of Crown Lands matters connected with the leases of Coreena. So I once more steamed up to Brisbane and put up at our Queensland Club, where as usual I met a host of friends. I dined at Government House with Sir Arthur Kennedy, who was then the reigning Governor, and his daughter, whose experiences in other governments stood her in good stead. Sir Arthur was one of a band of brothers who had devoted their lives to the service of their Queen; he was then commencing his government of Queensland, which was only terminated by his lamentable death in June, 1883.

I returned to Sydney in time for Christmas, later

on I paid a visit for the new year to Dr. Jenkins, of Nepean Towers, on the Hawkesbury, to inspect his famous shorthorns, a couple of which, of the famous "Theodore" family, I bought at a subsequent visit. Nepean Towers was not a bad imitation of an English country house, and the family was charming ; but beyond the stud herd there was not much to see in the surrounding country. As a matter of climate it was not bracing, and wealthy settlers are now more given to seeking the health-giving altitude of the Blue Mountains, than building their homesteads on the eastern side of them. I spent the first month of 1878 very pleasantly at Sydney, the social pleasures of which were always pleasantly blended with novelty, for one met at the hospitable houses of Sydney's merchant kings travellers of culture, who had visited many a land and could talk of something beyond the gossip of a town, the hospitalities of Mount Adelaide to wit.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### VISITS TO THE DARLING DOWNS—STOCKING UP COREENA—INCIDENTS OF LIFE THERE.

I LEFT for Queensland again at the end of January, 1878, and paid a round of visits on the Darling Downs, this district being then in a fine condition of prosperity. I went to Headington Hill and spent a few days with M. C. Mason, who had everything in apple pie order. This estate was all freehold, and about the pick of the agricultural portion of the Darling Downs; it had been put together by William Davenport, an experienced Victorian, for his principals, the Messrs. Fisher. A good deal of the best land was under plough, and model farming was the order of the day.

It was no doubt a matter of considerable benefit to owners of land on the Darling Downs, that experiments in agriculture should be made by men of experience, who could, at any rate then, afford it; but it is somewhat sad to reflect that pioneers generally are not successful, and that agriculture forms no exception to that rule. This beautiful estate thrived as long as you could feed it with

*VISIT TO THE DARLING DOWNS.*

capital; when that ceased, it went to the wall, and has now been repurchased by the Government, and cut up for smaller selection.

Mason grew an excellent class of sheep at Headington Hill, and was a thoroughly practical and useful man, and hospitable and good-natured to a degree. I recollect his driving me over to Clifton, and our witnessing a quaint fight between two eagle hawks and a native bear; the eagle hawks were getting the best of it, and being too engaged in the fight to observe us, allowed Mason to get within shot, so he first shot one hawk, then the other; but when he got to the bear, that showed fight, and we had to knock it on the head too. Mason was a good shot, and fond of quail shooting, of which there used to be plenty on the Darling Downs.

From Headington Hill, I visited my excellent friends, the Wienholts, at Goomburra, and spent a pleasant week riding about to Maryvale, Glengallan, Warwick, and the surrounding country, coming back every night to a well-served dinner and pleasant talk of old days. One always met at Goomburra some good old chums, and nothing could be pleasanter than the surroundings of a good homestead on the Darling Downs, where the nights are always cool, and the days, except in perhaps three months of the year, never too oppressive. Along parts of Goomburra Creek there is some fifteen feet of rich black soil, which

grew magnificent vegetables, especially "English" potatoes, which took the prize at the Warwick show, and equalled anything I ever saw at English shows. At Maryvale, we came in for a capital crop of grapes, which thrive particularly well on all parts of the Darling Downs. I find by my diary, I coupled business with pleasure in buying thirty-five bulls from Slade, of Glengallan, at the then low price of £15 each, and secured from Maryvale for £150, that fine Clydesdale colt, "Enterprise," which became in after years the champion of the Aramac district.

I visited also Glengallan, once the property of Marshall and Deuchar, now that of Marshall and Slade. This property had under Slade's careful management, even then attained a high reputation for breeding every class of stud stock; the rich black soil of the creek flats being especially favourable to the growth of lucerne, of which more has been grown there than perhaps on any estate on the Darling Downs. This supply was used for the winter keep of the stud stock, and it was hard to say which were the best, the shorthorns, or the merinos. To any young man who elects to start a farm for agricultural or grazing purposes in Queensland, I would certainly say, go and have a look at Glengallan, and work under Slade for a twelvemonth. If he does so, there is no fear of his contracting lazy habits.

This February, 1878, brought splendid rains



QUEENSLAND NATIVE BEAR AND YOUNG.





everywhere in Queensland, another of those grand seasons which stamped the decade of the seventies as the lucky one for the squatters of that day. The season promising so well, and learning from our manager at Coreena that the improvements for sheep were well on the way, I started our sheep investments for that property with the purchase from the Messrs. Wills, of Cullinaringo, in the Springsure district, of 10,000 maiden ewes at 6s. 6d., and 10,000 wethers at 6s., these having about six months' wool on. Roads were very heavy and the country had had a thorough soaking. I found both the Messrs. Wills and their families living in a simple and easy fashion, and doing most of their own sheep work. I inspected the sheep and generally approved of them, knocking off 6d. from the ewes and taking 5,000 more of the wethers at 6s. I had a nasty trip across flooded rivers, and made my way from the Nogoia to the Peak Downs, where my friends were glad to see me. I then went on to Coreena, where I arrived 4th April, my visit south having been extremely useful in showing me what other pastoralists were about.

Once back at Coreena, I settled down to preparations for the sheep I had purchased, high carriage and labour making it clear to us that a cattle station is not turned into a modern sheep station for nothing. What with paddocks for the various classes of sheep and the carriage of wire, dams and reservoirs for the paddocks that had no natural water, huts and pad-

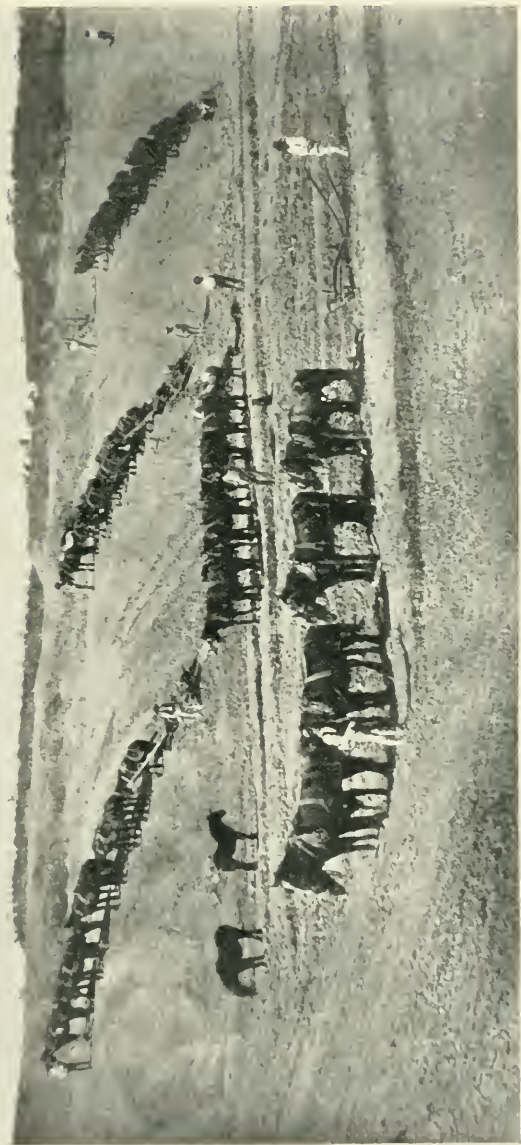
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docks for the boundary riders, drafting yards, and last, but not least, an up-to-date woolshed with huts for the shearers, wool presses of a modern pattern, etc., etc., the cheque book was always going and the debit side of the bank book swelled visibly.

Still there was encouragement both in the excellence of the country and in the fact that a lot of clever Victorians and others were doing the same, and that on a big scale. All this development was being done on the faith that the prices for wool and sheep would remain what they had been. They did so up to 1884; after that the fall was steady and seemingly irrecoverable, and those who held on beyond that period had to suffer the penalty, whilst those who sold out saved their bacon. That is broadly what took place, but there were undoubtedly instances where by prudence and good management profits continued to be made after the year I have mentioned, especially when the debt on the property was not a large one. Of squatting on unborrowed capital there were very few instances in Queensland, the establishment of big banks, finance and mortgage companies to wit.

It may be a comfort, however, to reflect that the opening up and fertilizing of country, if not always fortune making, is a generous and unselfish pursuit, and that it has occasionally even in that distant land its moments of unalloyed satisfaction.

I well recollect we made a big dam on Politic Creek, and soon after it was finished I had to go



DAM MAKING OUT WEST.



VISIT TO THE DARLING DOWNS.

on some business trip beyond Blackall. Not long after, for a wonder, rain fell to run the creek, and I got a telegram at Blackall to the effect that the "Politic Creek" dam was full; so coming back, as I neared the water shed where the dam was situated, I got excited, eager to catch a glimpse of the water, and I will not readily forget the thrill of satisfaction at seeing more than a mile off a big, glittering sheet of water, over a mile in length, which had made permanently available country for 20,000 sheep. Oddly enough, black swans and pelicans, besides innumerable wild duck, had already taken possession, and swam away as if they had been there all their lives. I recollect shooting a swan, then a *rara avis*, and swimming in to get him, but he was no good for the pot. I spent most of the year at Coreena, and found plenty to do. Aramac soon grew into an important little township, my friend, T. S. Sword, now a member of the Queensland Land Board, doing duty as our police magistrate. In October we were favoured by a visit from our member for the Mitchell, Boyd D. Morehead, to whom we gave a dinner, where I acted as chairman, these being still the good old days when squatting constituencies returned representatives interested in the pursuit, instead of Radicals ready to wage war against capital.

The pastoral shows which had been started in the South of Queensland, and had done well at Clermont and Springsure, repeated themselves, but on a larger

scale, in the broad west. The Aramac Show of June, 1878, was an excellent beginning. It became customary to follow the show up with three days' good racing, making up a week's carnival. I recollect we got a fair share of prizes in the horse and cattle classes, the sheep prizes going chiefly to Saltern, Aramac and Bowen Downs. For merino sheep the pens of fat wethers were extraordinary, averaging something like 90 lbs. weight, so fattening were the grasses of the district. These shows, which are carried on now I am glad to see, became famous institutions, enabling the squatting neighbourhood to meet in friendly rivalry and discuss endless subjects of sheep and cattle management, and concert protective measures of alas! growing interest—such as the extermination of marsupial and other pests. These shows are multiplying with the growth of the country, and to the sparse exhibits originally sent many others are being added connected with agriculture, dairying and so forth. At Aramac, though at first confined to sheep, cattle and horses, the show was wonderfully good, and it would have been hard to beat at Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne cattle of the breeding and symmetry of some of the exhibits from Thorntons, Mount Cornish or Coreena.

Coreena was a bit off the main road from Blackall to Aramac, still we used from time to time to see neighbours and friends, and one day in August I was glad to see Inspector John Aherne turn up, for he was amongst the best known and most efficient police

officers in Western Queensland, who had secured to that district its meed of safety to person and property and had grown with the district, thereby knowing the ins-and-outs of stockman and boundary rider, shearer and teamster, and with an insight into the inner thoughts of cattle or horse stealers. I believe John Aherne had assisted in the famous Bowen Downs cattle stealing case of the early Barcoo days, and no big police case in the western districts could be well solved without his assistance. Like most Irishmen he loved a good horse and kept a few good ones. Any way his arrival was always cheery and welcome, and on this occasion, accompanied by a couple of troopers, he was in an unusual hurry, and we had some difficulty in making him stop the night, for he said he had been sent for to Muttaborra, a township fifty miles beyond Aramac, near which in a reservoir near the road the body of a swagsman had been found floating. The man had evidently been stabbed and robbed of whatever he may have had on him. I now give the case as Aherne told it to us on his return to Aramac:

He found on enquiry at Muttaborra township that a man answering the description of the murdered man had passed through the township with a mate who had spent the night with him at the reservoir; that man was the man to find out, and Aherne was soon working the wires, enquiring after that mate on the main roads leading to the coast, but without effect. Aherne somehow got an idea that the man



had not travelled down country, but probably doubled back for safety, so as luck would have it Aherne made for the Bowen Downs woolshed, where, as the biggest shed of that part of the country, a large number of hands used to gather up.

The woolshed and the shearers' hut were visible a long way from the Muttaborra road, and Aherne and his men rode straight to the cook's galley, and entered into conversation with the cook, who was bustling about, asking him what new hands had been lately taken on. Aherne thought the man looked a bit confused, and well he might, as Aherne casually, on bending down to get a light for his pipe from the ashes of the galley fire, spied the glimmer of silver, and hooked out of the cinders a silver chain and watch, which it became evident the cook had hastily hidden on seeing the police ride across the plain towards his camp. His guilty conscience had betrayed him, for when Aherne put him into handcuffs on divining the situation, a cheque in favour of the murdered man, together with other chattels, were found in his swag. Circumstantial evidence accumulated against him, and no doubt he would have been convicted had Aherne been able to bring him back to the nearest jail. But the man cheated the gallows; he was temporarily handcuffed round the chimney post of an old hut, and on getting freedom and the use of a knife to eat his dinner with he plunged it into his heart, and thus ended this bush drama.

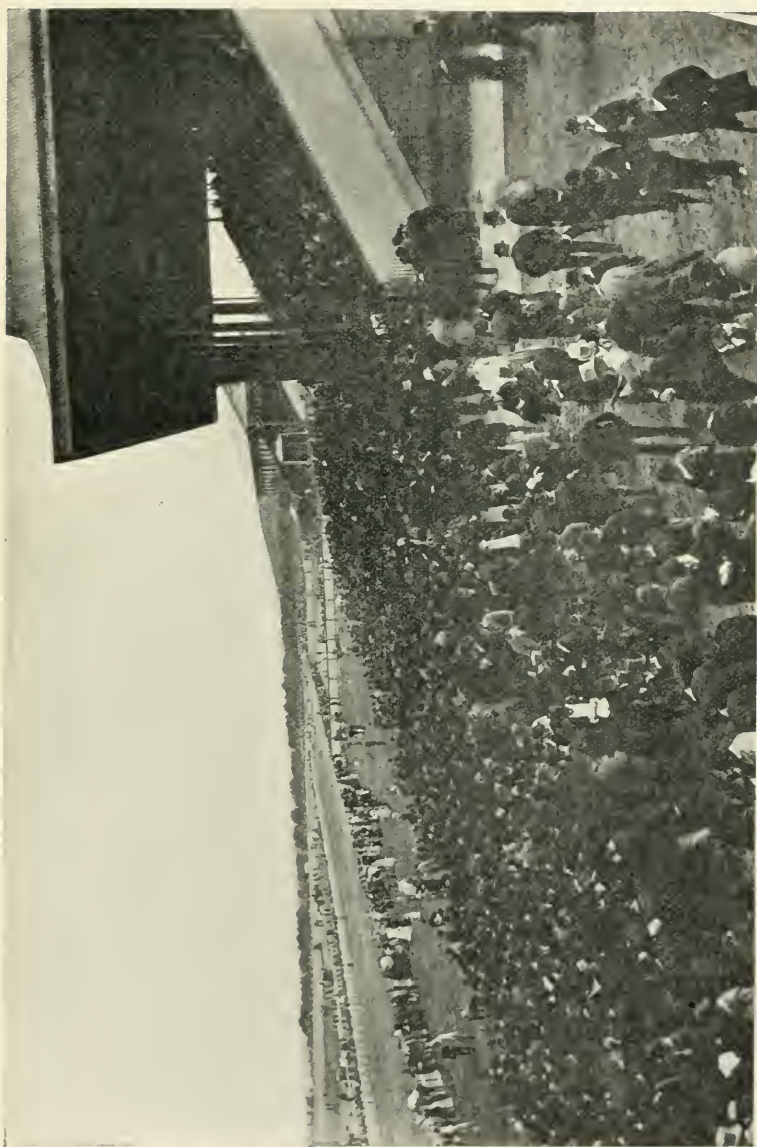
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It was certainly a most remarkable thing that John Aherne should instinctively have ridden straight to the place, and indeed to the very spot where the man he was in search of was employed. In those days these widespread districts were singularly free from crime. "Soldiering," or stealing horses, and occasionally cattle, were the principal offences, the broad plains of the Barcoo being too rich and open to favour cattle or sheep stealing on any scale.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### A SHORT TRIP SOUTH — SYDNEY, MELBOURNE, HOBART.

AFTER shearing I wended my way south again, looking up the Sydney Exhibition, and sharing sundry hospitalities at Government House, where Sir Hercules and Lady Robinson were at the time the popular representatives of royalty in New South Wales. It was impossible not to admire and respect a man, who, like Sir Hercules, added to the greatest experience in Colonial administration and an accurate knowledge of Colonial ministers, a thorough knowledge of all field sports, an accomplishment which goes a long way in the Australian Colonies, where, at certain times of the year, a Governor is a good deal like a fish out of water if he does not understand racing. Sir Hercules raced himself and with fair success, the Australian Derby winner "Kingsborough," and other winners to wit. I can recall him now facing the lawn at Randwick, talking to James White, Edward Lee, or Harry Dongar, his well set-up figure, clad in the inevitable well-fitting grey frock coat, discussing



RANDWICK RACE COURSE, SYDNEY, N.S.W.



the coming fortunes of the day, quite a peerless gentleman, and most excellent representative of the Queen.

I went on to Melbourne for the new year, and attended the races with Lord Normanby's party, seeing the Panic horse "Wellington" win the three-mile champion race. There were plenty of attendant festivities, for the hospitalities of Toorak will never languish whilst Riverina lasts, there being no colony in Her Majesty's dominions where hospitality is wider or society maintains its gaiety more thoroughly than in Victoria.

The heat was great for Melbourne, so I was rejoiced to be able to follow up Sydney and Melbourne with a visit to the "tight little island," bracing Tasmania. We started by the short sea journey, Henry Weld Blundell and I, to Launceston in a very crowded boat, for the "bookies" were going over to the Tasmanian race meetings, and this did not add to the comfort of the journey. Blundell was going to visit his cousin, Sir Frederick Weld, who was the then popular Governor of Tasmania.

Hobart was, and ever will be, incomparably refreshing at this time of the year to all Queenslanders and Sydneyites, who can afford time to get away from tropical heat and enjoy a land which is more like a bit of England and Scotland blended than any country south of the line. When we got to Hobart, it was the gay season and there was much going on; a round of parties graced by the freshest

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of beauty, everyone looking pleased, for neither time nor business seem in Hobart to write the wrinkles they do on people's brows in Sydney and Brisbane. We were in time to see the annual race meeting at



SIR FREDERICK WELD, K.C.M.G.  
(Governor of Tasmania).

Elwick, in that charming bend of the Derwent which forms, perhaps, one of the most picturesque racecourses in the world. In such lovely surroundings we thought that never had "Piper sec" tasted



*A SHORT TRIP SOUTH.*

so exhilarating as at dear old Smith Travers' luncheon carriage.

Travers and his brother stewards had done wonders for the management of the meeting, which with pleasant society and perfect surroundings went off famously. I recollect meeting Sir James Agnew at William Degrave's to taste a so-called Tasmanian salmon, which was only, alas! a large brown trout; but the controversy was raging fiercely on the subject at the time and I said nothing. I also enjoyed an evening with Sir Frederick Weld, who treated us to venison from "Quamby," and Hermitage from the Côtes d'Or; verily one could exclaim with Byron, "Fair clime where every season smiles benignant o'er that blessed Isle" with greater justice in regard to Tasmania than any "Isle of Greece," so perfect is the climate and so excellent are the various amenities of life.

This was not my first visit to the island, for I had been there in Colonel Gore Browne's time many years before, and I visited it in after years, but Hobart has never palled; it has always been and ever will be the sanatorium of tropical Australia. It is an especial place for old people, who linger on to a wonderful age, and it is last but not least a moderate place to live in. The well-appointed English light coach that ran from Hobart to Launceston used to be one of the pleasant features of the "tight little island," but that has been replaced by a jolting and apparently ill-conducted

railway line. Tasmania still furnishes in the far-famed Gibson blood the crack merinos of the day, from which many a famous Australian flock has drawn its success, these rams nearly always fetching the highest prices at the annual Sydney and Melbourne Ram sales.

Apart from the value to tropical Australia of Tasmania as a health resort and of Hobart's charm as a residence, also of the value to Pastoral Australia of the high class merino sires procurable from breeders in the island, Tasmania has of late years developed immense mining resources, and in Mount Lyell and Mount Bischoff possesses perhaps two of the finest tin mines in the world. So that, notwithstanding the chaos of mountains you view from the top of Mount Wellington (one of the features of Hobart), you may say that there is wealth in those rocks. Besides the mineral wealth Tasmania is so rapidly developing, which makes her an Australian Cornwall, the sportsman can in many lakes and streams of great beauty tempt trout of an enormous size with all kinds of unwonted baits. Hence a trip to Tasmania in the new century will mean in one way or another attractions and interests that were hardly dreamt of thirty years ago.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ARAMAC AND DARLING DOWNS REVISITED.

I GOT back to the Aramac in April, 1879, to find plenty of work and a magnificent season, rain this year being well disseminated, there having been heavy rains in May which ran the creeks, and there was rain every second month mostly of the year, so it was a grand year for pastoral operations. In June there was a good show, where our cattle and horses again did well, followed by races, when my little "Whisker," a son of "Lord of the Hills," won both the principal handicaps. The gathering was far bigger than the previous one, and marked an era of considerable progress.

I was fortunate in securing a good manager who had just spent seven or eight years in charge of the sheep at Bowen Downs, Mr Sidney W. Donner, and now I felt relieved of all anxiety, for my health was not very good, and I had strong thoughts of taking another trip to England, if possible; but most of the year was spent in looking after the improvements, and settling ourselves into a sheep station. We sheared in our new woolshed at the

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Sixteen Mile for the first time, and found the sheep gave satisfactory results; and I am glad to think that the wool-growing qualities of the country have never deteriorated, for the Aramac country being on the fringe of the broken or desert country, is certainly remarkably fortunate in its rainfall. Considerations which have made me reflect often how much better we should have done had we kept Coreena and sold the country further west, than selling Coreena later on, which we did.

What with buying odd lots of sheep and selecting rams, etc., I was always on the move; in November, I see it noted, we had a good lambing, cutting 87 per cent. of lambs. Towards the end of the year I went down to the Peak Downs for my Christmas, seeing the New Year, 1880, in at Clermont. From there I made my way, *viâ* Brisbane, to Yandilla, where I was anxious to secure some more breeding ewes. I found Frank Gore as hospitable and obliging as ever, and, although I had been told I should have to put on evening dress, he was good enough to excuse one who had "Jackaroed" under his uncle at Yandilla twenty years before.

On my Darling Downs excursions I used to hear the various flocks discussed: Jimbour, Jondaryan, and many others, but Yandilla was always most in favour in regard to breeding ewes, if you could get them. Fortunately, the Gores let me have a small lot of 6,000 young ewes, also some rams,

and I was lucky in getting one of the young Archers to take them up to Coreena.

It was pleasant to re-visit Yandilla, still "fat and fertile," but it was only to be reached through endless fenced lanes of closed settlement, a contrast to the open pastures of over twenty years ago that I had so often ridden over. In one instance, near the North Branch, I recollect narrowly escaping, in old days, being caught by a bush-fire. Heavy stocking had done away with that danger nowadays. However, Yandilla remains a very fine estate, and its homestead, bowered in vines and fruit trees, still smiled its hospitable welcome. This station and Eton Vale, if I mistake not, are the only estates on the Darling Downs that remain in the possession of the families that took them up in the forties. The Gores have stuck well to colonial life, and have not figured much in England, but Sir Arthur Hodgson, of Eton Vale, has for many years lived to the fore in England in pleasant and well-earned repose. The clock seems to have stood still for some of the Darling Downs pioneers, whose long, happy and useful lives should be the best advertisement for the settlement of that country.

There is no hardship in living nowadays on the Darling Downs; in the first place, the climate is perfect there, the ways have become smooth with a railway at your door, and sport, society and social freedom are all within your reach. The squatter, big or small, has no butcher or bakers' bills to

pay, for he grows his own flour and meat; sugar and rum are grown on the coast, and the day is not far distant when tea and coffee will also be Queensland grown.

Such advantages should attract to this favoured part of Southern Queensland from the old country small capitalists who have a taste for breeding choice cattle and sheep, for which there are handy colonial markets; or it should tempt young fellows who want to breed remounts for European cavalry and the Indian or South African markets. Live stock of every kind thrive to perfection on the Darling Downs in summer, and the soil is good enough to grow oaten and wheaten hay, lucerne and maize, to any required extent for the consumption of the stock in May, June, July and August, the so-called Australian winter months, when cold winds nip up the grass on the open plains, and the live stock do not fare so well on grass alone.

The picturesque country, a wide plateau of park-like appearance, is ever healthy, and the investor is still in time to pick up a good slice of black soil land at a figure which he can make sure will in ten years' time, or possibly less, have doubled in value.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### SECOND TRIP HOME AND BACK BY THE CAPE.

HAVING settled my affairs for a second trip home, I left Sydney in the *Avoca* on 17th February, 1880, for Melbourne, where I changed to the *Assam*, a P. and O. steamer. I had a good shipmate in C. W. Little, who was taking a run home after a good many years' hard work. There were no striking incidents of the voyage; in those days if the ships were smaller, the number of P. and O. travellers was smaller also, and you generally knew everybody. Some eighteen or twenty years after, first-class travellers have more than doubled themselves with the expansion of the Australian Colonies, and the result is you may know very few if you travel now. At Galle I was glad to get a deck cabin in the *Mirzapore*, for we took ninety Indian passengers from Calcutta, amongst whom I met a fair cousin. The Indian contingent was, again, pleasant and musical, and we were rather sorry than otherwise when we got to Suez and disbanded. Amongst the notable passengers were Sir Richard



Harrison, Sir Richard Temple, and one of the Rothschilds, the *Ceylon* being crammed full from Alexandria to Brindisi, not a few being candidates hastening to England for the political fray that was to end in such disaster for the Conservative party.

Little and I lingered in Venice and Milan, being in no hurry to reach England till after April. We also took a good turn in Paris, so pleasant in that month. I was glad to see all my old friends of 1877, and there seemed to be no diminution of warmth in their welcome. Once again the Smiths put me up at the Travellers' for a month, where, if "travelling" was held to render you fit for membership, I should certainly have qualified. I saw "Bend Or" win the Derby, and the even greater "Isonomy" the Ascot Cup. I seemed to know more people, and the attractions of the season were certainly greater. *L'appétit vient en mangeant.*

I paid my first visit to Newmarket, and saw an American colt win the July Stakes; I went there from Cambridge with Alfred Maudslay, a great traveller, who, fortunately for myself, had included Queensland in his travels. I spent all the time I could amongst my relatives and friends in Worcestershire and Shropshire; paid a somewhat sad visit to the Pyrenees, and, choosing another line, shipped myself in the Orient liner *Aconcagua* from Plymouth, *viâ* the Cape for Australia. The feature of the trip was that we had Strauss' band on board, going out to the Melbourne Exhibition; they of course had to

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practise, but that practice was very good, some of the leaders being first-rate violinists. By the time we got to Melbourne I knew by heart most of the marches and still more of the seductive waltzes that the great Viennese had ever composed. Never had I been so imbued with music, which certainly in my bygone days "had not always met the ear."

We touched and landed at St. Vincent, and our band gave the sunburnt inhabitants a treat. On Monday, 13th September, we arrived at Cape Town, being a little over three weeks from Plymouth, and I am inclined to think that for those who have to leave England for Australia in August it is best to do so *viâ* the Cape, as it is certainly infinitely cooler. Of course by the Canal, Aden, and Colombo, the journey is brighter and more diversified, but at the same time in July, August, September and October it is infinitely hotter, and therefore much more enervating.

Beyond going to Wynberg by rail we didn't see much of the Cape, which since that day has so enormously developed with its annual export of some eight millions' worth of gold. It possesses evidently a good climate; but, taking all I have read of and heard of the Cape as a colony for white men who do not want to displace native vested interests, give me Australia in preference. Give me a land free from Matabeles, Zulus, and the rinderpest, "the Colossus of Rhodes" and his splendid Imperialism notwithstanding. I felt somehow no

desire to travel hundreds of miles by rough rail or rougher coach to get to country that had any width about it. I prefer Sydney to Cape Town, Melbourne to Johannesburg, and Brisbane to Buluwayo.

Let us hope that our good frozen mutton and beef will be appreciated in South Africa before long, denied as they are the supply of our splendid merinos, and even more that of our fat shorthorns. And as their supply of horseflesh is precarious, I beg to say Australia is at hand to supply *that* useful means of travel and colonisation to any extent.

Since I wrote the above lines which noted my call at the Cape in 1880 and its progress after, England has been engaged in a war *à l'outrance* with the forces of the two Dutch South African Republics, the result of which, though still undecided, viewing the power and resources of Great Britain, must end in the annexation of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

When this takes place the development of these new English colonies will open out commercial relations with the Australian colonies of the very highest value to both South Africa and Australia; for Australia, which is only the same distance from the Cape as Europe, can furnish all the necessary live stock in horses, cattle and sheep that South Africa will lack for some time to come, and can supply flour, sugar and meat at a cheaper rate than any other source of supply until Natal, and the newly incorporated colonies to be, have in their

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turn, under England's magic wand, expanded the arts of peace and become in themselves sources of supply both agricultural and pastoral. New Zealand mutton is already being successfully sent to the Cape, and the market once properly opened other supplies will follow, and Australia will then receive some *quid pro quo* for the contingents she has furnished in South Africa to help the mother country to the victorious end she is bound to attain.

The journey from the Cape to Adelaide was a matter of some sixteen days' good steaming across a dreary waste of mighty ocean, that made even the largest vessel look small as it rode in the trough of hugh seas unchecked by land in any direction. The various classes of passengers gave musical entertainments and fancy dress balls, everything being done that could cheer the time away. We landed at Adelaide on the third of October, and were glad of a good square meal of fresh food at the York Hotel. Next day, making our way to Melbourne by the "back stairs passage," we had a view of the handsome Orient liner *Sorata*, wrecked in a mysterious manner on the Attala reef, the account of which had read like a "queer story," but here she was apparently "charging" the rocky coast.

At Melbourne I had merely time to see the Exhibition and pay my respects to Lord Normanby before the *Aconcagua* was off again, and I had

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a narrow shave of missing my passage. We had a rapid trip to Sydney, where I found all well, though the news from Western Queensland pointed to the good year we had had in 1879 being followed in 1880 by a season as dry as the last had been wet; so there was nothing for it but to go up to the station, *viâ* Brisbane and Rockhampton, and see how matters really were.







## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### REPRESENTATION OF THE MITCHELL.

THE Central railway westward from Rockhampton in those days reached only to Emerald, from which I took Cobb's coach to the "Grey Rock," the nearest camp to Coreena, where the manager had not a bright account to give of anything. Such a change to a good season; everything looked withered up, the watercourses were dry, and the reign of King Drought was evidently in the ascendant. I will spare the reader on this occasion the description of the western country in a drought, preferring to adopt the motto of the sundial—*Non numero horas nisi serenas*. The thermometer marked over 100 in the shade every day, which was high for October; the following month it reached 110 in the shade, the hottest I had seen it at Coreena. I thought this could not last long, and on the 18th November a heavy storm fell that relieved our most pressing wants and brought down the thermometer to 68 in the evening. This was followed later on by a complete break up of the drought.

On the 14th December I drove into Aramac and

learnt that B. D. Morehead, the sitting member for the Mitchell, had resigned his seat and had been placed in the upper house. A number of my friends were anxious that I should succeed him. I set the wires at work and was able in the course of a few days to issue my address to the electors of the Mitchell.

That electorate in those days was not divided and reached beyond Tambo to the south, and included the townships of Tambo, Blackall, Isisford, Aramac and Muttaborra, being by far the most important pastoral electorate in Queensland. I became a candidate with the co-operation and promise of support of a number of neighbours and powerful friends, with the view of opposing the famous Warrego and Trans-continental railway scheme, which would have given a syndicate of British and foreign capitalists the exclusive right to make railways from Brisbane to the Gulf of Carpentaria on the land grant principle, and would have placed in their hands some twelve million acres of the finest land in the colony, principally in the district I stood to represent, in alternate blocks of ten thousand acres on both sides of the line, giving the lucky holders a monopoly of the land on both sides of the line to a depth of fifteen miles; thus placing the occupants of the back country to a great extent at the syndicate's mercy.

Not only was the company to get the ten or twelve millions of acres of land for building the railway, but the syndicate stipulated that the

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Government should afterwards purchase the railway at a valuation equal to some millions sterling. Besides which it was shown later on by the company's articles of association, registered in London, that the company would not only hold the land, but it would exercise supreme control over everybody that settled upon it. It was a scheme, in fact, for setting up an independent sovereignty in the heart of Queensland, according to which the foreign capitalists concerned in it might do everything in its own territory but coin money, and in all trade defy competition.

This was a bold and dangerous stroke, which public and legislative opinion fortunately defeated. I forget how much the distinguished promoters of the scheme were to have netted per man, had the venture succeeded, but it stood at a very big sum. General Feilding and Mr. Watson, a civil engineer of note, took a surveying trip from Charleville to Point Parker, in the Gulf, and their report of the excellence of the country to be traversed made the proposals of the syndicate look still more exacting.

The Hon. George King, M.L.C. of Gowrie, formerly Treasurer of N.S.W., Messrs. Samuel Griffiths, and others in the Queensland Parliament, and the authors of a certain powerful yellow pamphlet, ruthlessly exposed the project, which caused intense excitement in the colony. Not but that a trans-continental line would have been a

good thing for Queensland, if placed on the same footing as the other Government lines, and built, as the Queensland railways can now be built, over the western plains, that is at less than £3,000 a mile all told, including the rolling stock.

I think most colonists with the knowledge of the colony's wants have advocated the tying up, so to speak, of the western termini of the present main trunk lines of Queensland at Charleville, Longreach and Hughenden, or Winton on to Cloncurry, and thence to some Gulf port by a trans-continental line, the limits of which would be covered by some 800 miles of railway, at the cost of under two millions and a half, that line of country offering no engineering difficulties whatever. The reader may see at a glance on the map that is annexed to this chapter the lines to be connected by such a railway. I contend, in fact, that Queensland's future cannot be properly developed without such a railway, or her wool and meat, and mineral resources properly tapped without it; also that such a line, the cost of which is a bagatelle compared to the interests involved, should have taken the precedence over the railway lines recently built to skirt the eastern coast alongside water carriage.

Electioneering in Queensland, and especially in the Mitchell, in the hot months of January and February, is a rough game; but with good buggy horses, eagerly lent, with hospitable Barcoo stations

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open to you at the end of your day's stage, and with a resolute old mate like Charles Lumley Hill, it wasn't a bad schooling for that intimate knowledge of the pastoral position of affairs that its representatives in the Queensland Parliament of those days generally possessed. We held meetings at all the townships, and in Tambo I made the acquaintance of the late Duke of Manchester, who was touring in the west in his shirt sleeves, and with a large hole in his boot, jolly, debonnaire and cosmopolitan as ever. We dined and spent a very pleasant evening together, I recollect, and I was much struck with his broad views on all colonial questions. What a squatter he would have made.

After canvassing the southern part of the electorate at Tambo, Blackall and Isisford, where H. B. Gough entertained us royally, I was handed over to Brown, of Saltern Creek, with whom I was to canvass the north and western end of the electorate. We met the electors at Muttaborra, where Edkins, of Mount Cornish, whose kind wife entertained us most hospitably, had paramount influence. How we did enjoy the evening shower bath after our dusty drives, and how soundly we rested, the great heat notwithstanding, generally in shake-downs on the passion-fruit clad verandahs, which oftenest form the airy summer bedrooms of the traveller in the far west.

It was arranged by my supporters that I should

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see the polling through in my adversary's country, whilst he laid siege to my end of the constituency; so I saw the polling through at the township of Blackall, and my opponent at Aramac. Everything on both sides to secure the victory was done without acerbity, and with a good deal of good humour; but the second week of February saw me elected by a substantial majority, my opponent, a well-known Barcoo squatter, being an old friend and very good fellow.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### PARLIAMENT AND LAND LAWS.

#### THE BIG WEST AND GRAZING FARMS.

WHEN all was over I felt very proud at representing the largest pastoral constituency in broad Queensland, though I was fully aware that in the state of parties it involved great responsibilities. The House did not meet till July of that year (1881), when I took my seat in a House that numbered fifty-five members, with a number of whom I had old personal acquaintance.

The records of Hansard show that, although Members of Parliament in Queensland were not paid in those days, as they are now, I did not eat the bread of idleness. I strongly opposed the sale of large blocks of land on Peak Downs by the Government at 10s. an acre, a low value for deep black soil land, and I am glad to think I was right in my deduction, for it seems more than probable that the Government will have to buy back large areas on Peak Downs for agricultural settlement, in the same way that they have found themselves



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compelled to do further south on the Darling Downs.

Fresh from a close acquaintance with the pastoral districts chiefly concerned, I tabled a motion for railway extensions to the chief pastoral centres of the colony, reviewing exhaustively the development that was taking place in them and the capital they were attracting (Hansard, vol. 35, pp. 378-381). This was chiefly with the view of proving that the trans-continental line that had been so much talked about could well and safely be undertaken by the Colony with loan funds.

I gave a useful list of the principal pastoral holdings in my district, the carrying capacity of which amounted to six millions of sheep, which at this distance of time, nearly twenty years, it will not be uninteresting to quote *in extenso*, as these capabilities have in most instances been realized, and in some instances exceeded.

## LIST OF RUNS IN THE MITCHELL ELECTORATE AND THEIR SHEEP-CARRYING CAPACITY (1881):—

Tambo Station . . .	50,000	Evesham . . .	200,000
Enniskillen . . .	50,000	Stamfordham & Katandra	300,000
East Darr . . .	200,000	HomeCreek & Barcaldine	200,000
Malvern Hills . . .	200,000	Maneroo . . .	150,000
Bimerah . . .	150,000	Maneroo East . . .	60,000
Westlands . . .	150,000	Emmet Downs . . .	50,000
Listowel . . .	150,000	Ruthven . . .	100,000
Beaconsfield . . .	150,000	Corella . . .	200,000
Cameron Downs and Lam-		Corona . . .	100,000
mermoor . . .	200,000	Lorne . . .	80,000
Portland . . .	200,000		
Isis Downs . . .	150,000	Carried forward . .	3,190,000
Avington . . .	100,000		

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Brought forward . . .	3,190,000	Kensington & Greenhills . . .	200,000
Culloden East . . .	100,000	Wellshot . . .	200,000
Coreena . . .	100,000	Bowen Downs . . .	200,000
Northampton Downs . . .		Aramac . . .	150,000
and Ravensbourne . . .	250,000	Alice Downs . . .	150,000
Apex Downs . . .	50,000	Saltern Creek . . .	200,000
Rodney Downs . . .	50,000	Silsoe . . .	80,000
Terrick . . .	200,000	Minnie Downs . . .	60,000
Two Rockwoods . . .	200,000		
Culloden W. . . .	100,000		5,536,000
Vergemont . . . .	80,000		

Say six millions of sheep.

To non-Australian readers the figures will read large, but they will explain the large scale upon which the sheep farmer of Western Queensland often conducts his business, which necessitates now-a-days such vast improvements; say a home-stead for himself and another perhaps for his assistants, a store for the station supplies, huts for men at the head station, horse paddocks big and small, a garden near the creek with some simple means of irrigation, such as a windmill pump; a stockyard and killing yard, and a wool-shed with perhaps fifty stands of Wolseley's shearing machines worked by a small steam engine; and attached to same a wool sorting room and shed for storage of wool awaiting carriage; this with an elaborate and comfortable shearers' hut and meal room, and huts for the rouse-about and pickers-up. Possibly also if wool scouring is done there will be, at some dam or bore within easy distance of the wool shed, an elaborate scouring plant with boilers, etc., and drying grounds. To these have to be added the

principal and costly sheep-carrying improvements of the station, that amount to hundreds of miles of six-wired sheep-proof fencing; together with water improvements for rendering evenly available the country at your disposal, whether these are the artesian bores, a discovery of the last ten years only and, as I have before said, only available in certain portions of the pastoral areas, or large reservoirs, commonly called dams, these being large excavations generally at the foot of a natural water hole in the creek and which back up the creek in some instances for miles; add to this drafting yards and boundary riders' huts and paddocks.

There are in fact instances in the properties of which the list has here been given, in which up to this period as much as 5s. per acre had been expended in tenants' improvements. Roughly speaking therefore and reckoning the sheep carrying capacity of the western country at two acres for every sheep, the extent of the country grazed by six millions of sheep in this one district would be twelve million acres, and if 5s. per acre represented the cost of the improvements, the amount spent by the squatters of this one district on land only leased to them by the Government, and that on a very precarious tenure, would amount and I daresay does amount to over three millions sterling.

Queensland carries some twenty to twenty-four millions of sheep, and the above calculations can be pretty well relied on as an average one for the whole

lot, that is, as regards the average cost of the improvements per head of sheep, but as regards quality of country a good many of these twenty-four millions of sheep, possibly one-third to one-half, would be carried on country not so heavily grassed as the Mitchell and Gregory districts, that is on country that would take, perhaps, four or five acres to graze one sheep, season by season; in this latter case, of course, the cost of improvements would not reach 5s. an acre.

However, these huge figures must not daunt the young English reader who may think of trying his luck in Queensland, for he has a paternal Government to deal with, which deals more leniently with the newcomer than it has done with either the pioneer holder, or the one to whom the pioneer has possibly sold his run at a profit. As mentioned in the political chapter of these reminiscences the pastoral lessee very nearly came to grief in 1868, and the Government gave him a long lease on a sliding scale of rent in 1869. When the expiry of the twenty-one years' lease was drawing near, the Government took power to resume, by Acts passed in 1884, 1886, in some cases one-half, in some one-third, and others one-fourth of these leaseholds in the so-called "unsettled" districts, which graze four-fifths of the sheep of the colony; and these resumed areas are now being gradually absorbed by a new class of pastoralists called grazing farmers, in blocks not exceeding twenty thousand acres for

twenty-one years, at an initial rent of a halfpenny per acre per annum. Before he can dispose of his grazing farm, the tenant must fence it in and he must be provided with capital to do so, as also to stock his grazing farm with, and of course, he must be able to water it to its required capacity, for the more he can distribute the water on his holding, the more sheep he can carry upon it.

These grazing farms have become the great pastoral attraction of Queensland, being open to young men of moderate capital who can work their farm with very few hands, and lead a life that is absolutely healthy, chiefly on horseback, and one which does not necessitate much manual or exhaustive labour. He can live as he likes, very comfortably or otherwise according to his means, and this new race of pastoralists are no doubt becoming a municipal and will become eventually a legislative power in the land. Pity it is that the Government of the day, in their desire to break up big holdings and prevent monopolies, wrought grave injustice to the lessees of properties from which these resumptions were made; for not only did they debar the old occupier from tendering in the otherwise open tender for any of the grazing farms resumed from his holding, but they prevented him from purchasing that farm in the otherwise open market when the fulfilled conditions of fencing enabled the owner to offer it for sale. This is a grave flaw in the statute book of Queensland, and the sooner it is expunged



BORIE COUNTRY, BARCOO, QUEENSLAND.





the better it will be for the credit of the colony, for it means special legislation against capital, and Queensland has yet to learn whether she can do without the capital that has so lavishly and confidently been poured into her lap by the investors of Great Britain.

Otherwise the "Grazing Farms Act" is a progressive and useful measure, for viewing the fact that the western plains of Queensland have some ten feet of rich soil, and that its native grasses teem with nourishment, also that much of it can be watered by artesian supply, at any rate for stock, it does not require much imagination to people it in coming years, with flourishing farmers who can do most of the work on their holdings with their boys, and send their daughters in the family buggy to the neighbouring State school. Such grazing farms pave the way, at no very distant date, for smaller holdings growing endless crops of wheat and maize; for the breaking up of the big stations now taking place to introduce the smaller lessee, means surely, in course of time, that the twenty thousand acre grazing farm will in its turn be considered a monopoly and fall a prey to dismemberment. We shall not "be there to see," but there is much to favour the reflection that thirty years hence Longreach may be the Chicago of Queensland, collecting the agricultural produce of the millions of acres of rich soil which surround it and which are so far only used for grazing purposes.

As the case now stands most of the artesian bores that have been sunk in Queensland have been put down by private enterprise, and not by the Government, and it is to be hoped that this generous expenditure, meaning often many thousands of pounds for one bore, may meet with recognition from the Legislature when the old leases, or rather what remain of them, are being further dealt with. The Government will be a wise one that respects the good faith of long-suffering tenants that ungrudgingly have witnessed the partition of their leaseholds at a time when the burden of great commercial changes in the value of their produce pressed heavily upon them, and rendered the reduction of their holdings ruinously inopportune.

This depression in pastoral profits seems to have cowed the lessees, and, in a great measure, kept them out of the political field when they should in Parliament have fought for their rights ; but in 1881 the pastoral interests of Queensland were still represented in the Legislative Assembly by some twenty members out of fifty-five, not a great proportion for what is admitted as the dominant interest of the colony. It would be difficult now, I understand, to find a dozen squatters out of the seventy-two members of the present Legislative Assembly, and unless pastoralists come forward to fight for their fair rights, what can they expect ? An old Queenslander is led to exclaim, Where are the sons of Queensland's early pioneers ? Youths of culture and good train-

ing, in most instances, they have left the field to the professional politician, whose labour platform savours of the rankest Socialism.

The session of 1881 broke up in October, and it was destined to be my last in the Parliament of Queensland.

Our firm of Milson and de Satgé sold Coreena to my friend, C. W. Little, with 42,000 sheep, 2,000 cattle, and 40 horses for £70,000. The sheep and cattle were good, and the run was only half stocked; still, it was considered a good price and denoted a good value for western country. The syndicate that bought it cracked on improvements and stock, and later on carried as much as 180,000 sheep upon it. They have been fortunate in securing artesian water at a moderate depth, which means utilizing all the country, such improvements quickly paying themselves, as it means sheep doing well, good lambings and clean wool. Parting with Coreena meant shifting such cattle as we didn't require to deliver with it to an extensive tract of country we had some time before secured in the extreme West of Queensland, on the Georgina River, near the northern territory of South Australia, where for the present purpose of these reminiscences we will leave them to breed up and fatten.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE CATTLE INDUSTRY.

FOR the benefit of any of my readers who may cast their eyes towards Queensland as a field for investment, I may say a few words on the cattle industry of Queensland, as that colony possesses more horned stock than all the other Australian colonies put together, and it is not unnatural to suppose that, as these colonies grow up and the southern colonies devote themselves more and more to agriculture, Queensland with her not wholly stocked pastures will continue to furnish them with beef.

When I mention that fat cattle are fetching at the present moment £10 to £12 in Western Australia, £8 to £10 in South Australia, the same and more in Victoria, and £5 to £8 in New South Wales, and only £3 to £4 in Queensland, and that most of the mouths are in the southern part of Australia, there is every encouragement for the Queensland grower in supplying the southern markets, apart from feeding the many meat-freezing and meat-preserving factories that have been established on the eastern



CATTLE ON THE NORTHERN PLAINS, QUEENSLAND.



## *THE CATTLE INDUSTRY.*

coast of Queensland, to which I make some reference later on.

Queensland has seven or eight millions of cattle, principally of the shorthorn breed, and these are located, not like the sheep of the colony, which are now almost entirely grazed on the western watersheds, that is, on the table-lands the other side of the Coast Range, but on the eastern watersheds of the colony along the sea coast, and also on the waters that flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria; that is to say, the cattle occupy by far the best watered part of pastoral Queensland and graze country that has been chiefly found to be unsuitable for sheep, as lacking the saline bushes and grasses that are essential to the health and well-being of the merino sheep.

Commencing at the southern end of Queensland, south of Brisbane, first-rate cattle properties are to be found on the Logan, where dairy farming is in good progress; then in East and West Moreton, within a radius of 100 miles from Brisbane, there are choice herds worked either for the supply of the Brisbane market, or for dairying purposes. These estates are chiefly freehold, and have to be very closely worked to make them pay a fair return on the capital value of the land. Further north the coast districts of Wine Bay, where my old friend Henry Littleton squatted for some years, and the Burnett, furnish excellent cattle stations, chiefly leasehold; and the same may be said further



north along the sea coast in the Broad Sound and Townsville district and north of that up to Cape York Peninsula, the settlement is chiefly that of cattle stations. Thence, turning westward to the Gulf country, there exists in the watersheds of the Mitchell, Gilbert, Flinders, Saxby, Leichardt, and Gregory shedding into the Gulf of Carpentaria, unbounded scope for cattle runs; most stations in that region being not more than half stocked. I may here quote what I wrote on the subject of the Gulf country for cattle when the tick disease broke out there a few years ago. This scourge has, like many other scourges, swept by, and the Gulf country has resumed its old state:—

“The country embraced in the watersheds of the Gulf of Carpentaria, watered by the Flinders and its tributaries, also the Leichardt, Saxby and Gregory, comprises the finest cattle country in Australia, and probably in the world, the heads of the Flinders affording also a large tract of magnificent sheep country. The large area under notice carries already some million head of cattle, and is only partly stocked; the bulk of it consists of large plains and lightly-timbered country, densely grassed with Mitchell and other nutritious and hardy grasses. It is watered beyond the average of Queensland country, and droughts are less frequent, owing to the regular tropical rains which the Gulf country enjoys. There has been so far no serious attempt (1898) to export from either Normanton or

Burketown, the two Gulf ports, a tithe of the meat, tallow, and other products which could be exported from works conceived with due regard to the extent of the production, cattle owners having for years past been content either to despatch their bullocks as stores to southern markets, an expensive and tedious process, which has left but a poor margin of profit, or to boil down their fats at the Normanton and Burketown boiling-down establishments, which are primitive, and make no attempts to save the nourishing portion of the beast in the shape of extract. The various meat works at Townsville and Bowen on the eastern coast certainly afford an outlet, but driving from 400 to 800 miles knocks the condition out of the cattle, and the Gulf herds must have some good works of their own to depend upon to do anything like justice to their growing produce. Neither Burketown nor Normanton are ports from which an export of frozen meat can just now be tackled with success, until, at least, the shallows of the Norman and Burke have been dealt with. But there are means of adding extract of meat and other bye products, and treatment of animal manure, etc., to the profits derived from boiling only, which the present establishments have not sought (1898), and which it is now absolutely necessary to add in order to obtain anything like the full value of a beast. The conditions of cattle growing in the Gulf are most advantageous. Climatic con-

ditions are not encouraging to close settlement. The leaseholder can therefore reckon upon a long enjoyment of his lease at a fairly cheap rental. The country is not troubled with railways or townships, and the squatter must be content for some time to come to lead a primitive life; on the other hand, he can work on a large scale for little money. The great fall in the value of cattle has caused much financial difficulty in these districts, but it is hoped the worst is over and a new era is opening for the cattle owners, who must surely soon see better times. I believe the tick disease that has recently developed itself in some of the lower portions of the Gulf seaboard to be a temporary plague only, which a good season or two will dispel. The Government, however, have quarantined the Gulf country from the twenty-first parallel of latitude northwards, preventing any cattle north of that line from travelling south of it on pain of confiscation. This will throw the Gulf cattle owners more on their own local resources than ever, preventing the export of their store cattle south. I am not sure that in a young and energetic community, which the Gulf people certainly are, this will not turn out a good stimulant to them to make use of their own northern ports instead of sending everything to the eastern coast, forgetting that Burketown and Normanton are nearer the home markets by many days' sail than Rockhampton, Bowen, or Townsville. To capitalists

there appears no better investment going at the present time than turning to better account the fine supply of good beef grown in the Gulf, and surely there is no time to lose in so doing."

Of course, cattle stations can be more cheaply worked than sheep stations, the rental of the country on cattle stations being the chief expenditure. The owner, with say a stockman and a couple of black boys, aborigines who take kindly to this work, are ample for the general management of a herd of 5,000 head of cattle. At branding time neighbours come in force to get such stray cattle of theirs as may have mixed with their neighbour's, and the heaviest work is thus got through three or four times a year by mutual assistance. The everyday work of the stockman and his boys is generally seeing that the herd keeps its boundaries, and there is always horse-breaking or some such work going on. It is by no means the incessant work that is demanded on a sheep station, where, on the scale mentioned in the foregoing chapter, it has resolved itself greatly into a question of financial skill backed up or not by good seasons. With cattle stations which are, as above noted, chiefly planted on the eastern and northern coast watersheds, neither the finance nor the skill is required, and being nearer the coast the rainfall is greater and the seasons more assured.

I consider that now these factories are established at the various ports cattle properties should rise

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greatly in value. To the south the cattle properties for an extensive radius round Brisbane have the benefit of the Queensland Meat and Export Company's works below Brisbane, which are extensive factories that freeze beef and mutton on a large scale in communication with the great Southern Railway line to Charleville. At the Queensland Export Company's works they also preserve meat in other shapes and produce extract of meat and tallow from any stock that is not quite prime enough for freezing, all the cattle slaughtered being subjected to rigid veterinary inspection. Besides these works there are also near Brisbane the canning works of the Messrs. Baynes, and on the Darling Downs there are preserving works at Oakey Creek, so that the extreme south of the colony, in addition to the meat consumption of the capital with its 100,000 population, is perhaps over-provided with outlets.

The Wide Bay, Burnett and Leichardt districts have factories at Gladstone and Rockhampton; below the latter town the important Fitzroy meat works deal not only with the coast cattle, but with western fat stock coming down by the Central Line, which taps the country for over 400 miles; these works deal with every branch of meat freezing, preserving and extract. Further north there are well-established factories at Broad Sound and Bowen; whilst at Townsville, the largest Queensland port north of Rockhampton, if not of Brisbane, the

branch factory of the Queensland Meat Export and Agency Co., and the Alligator Creek Meat Works, treat not only the fat cattle within those coast districts, but also the stock brought down from the western plains by the Northern Railway, which reaches inland to Winton over 300 miles.

Besides these large coast meat works there are boiling down and meat extract works at various inland western centres, such as Charleville, Barcardine, Longreach and Hughenden. In the Gulf of Carpentaria boiling down and extract works have been started at Normanton and Burketown.

So the means of disposing of surplus stock, though exercised at these various works last year only to the extent of a million of sheep and over a quarter of a million of cattle, are quite sufficient for the supply of fat stock in a normal season. The production of extract of meat, which is virtually the nourishing part of the meat, has saved Australia from the great boiling down waste of old days, and thereby redeemed an almost criminal action. Meat extract is now prepared everywhere, and finds its market under various nomenclatures in every kitchen of the civilized world, and it is a good thing to carry into the uncivilised world also, for no doubt it will nourish many a future explorer, who will make it a part of his outfit.

The owner of a Queensland cattle station, therefore, need not fear his market; there are outlets all round him, and at the present prices of such



properties they offer undoubtedly the best prospects of a paying investment for any young man with fair capital who does not mind work. The tick has temporarily frightened owners and buyers, hence the downfall in prices ; but that will not last, and there will be the usual Australian rebound. Cattle station life with a good homestead, a garden, a gun and some good horses and kangaroo dogs, is by no means a bad existence, especially if the squatter is married and his wife has sisters, and the neighbourhood has neighbours of the right kind, which it most often has. At any rate, the life is worth the try, and the time is a good one for investment, for you know your worst. You may, I believe, buy many a good cattle run in Queensland for 20s. to 30s. a head, and get from your fat bullocks 60s. at the present moment, with better prices in prospect.

Queensland besides has a number of other prospects if any one of them fails. Many a cattle owner has made his little pile at Charters Towers or the Gympie mines, and fresh mineral prospects are always opening, for is he not in the land of Mount Morgan and the worked-out Canoona, where gold in millions has been found in the most unlikely spots, and under what many reckoned to be almost geological impossibilities?



## CHAPTER XXXI.

### CLONCURRY—THE GEORGINA AND THE GULF.

THE sale of our station property on the Aramac, and a desire to settle down and spend a few years in England, determined me on giving up my seat for the Mitchell and with it the chances of Queensland political life. So after the session, and settling some Crown Lands matters relating to our country in the far west, I journeyed *viâ* Rockhampton to the Aramac, in persistently wet weather, to resign in person and in my constituents' own hands my seat as member for the Mitchell. I had a good reception at Aramac, and held an interesting meeting at which I reviewed the political and other chances of their fine district, describing a future which, I am glad to say, droughts and bad times notwithstanding, has been amply realized.

After bidding farewell to my good friends in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, I once more shipped in the P. and O. *Indus* for Europe and a long holiday.

I found myself obliged afterwards to visit Australia again at the end of 1883, and later on in 1888 I went out to Australia especially to inspect the

progress of a property we held large interests in, situate on the Georgina River, in the extreme north-west of Queensland and on the border of the northern territory of South Australia.

The journey I proposed to make to the extreme west of Queensland was to take me through the mineral district and township of the Cloncurry, and as that district in the important matter of mines and minerals, and the Wills, Burke and Georgina rivers and their tributaries lying to the west and south-west of the Cloncurry in the matter of pastoral resources, will represent some day an immense addition to the exports of Queensland, I propose to dwell briefly on the extent and quality of the mines and pastures of this undeveloped land of promise.

I had as companion on my expedition a charming captain R.N., brother to the manager of our station, and we journeyed very pleasantly together by P. and O. again *viâ* Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, where we only made short but agreeable stays. From Brisbane we went as far as Townsville by steamer, and thence took rail to Charters Towers, the great mining centre of Northern Queensland, and from there on to the terminus of the Northern Railway at Hughenden, on the edge of the great western plains, from which we were to take Cobb's coach to the Cloncurry, where a buggy and horses from the Georgina were to await us.

Hughenden station had been taken up in the sixties by that good settler, Robert Gray, and named

Hughenden after the English Hughenden that had belonged to Gray's family. The township a dozen years ago was an extremely noisy and bustling little place, being the centre of a large traffic in wool for London and fat stock for Townsville that aggregated at the terminus of the Northern Railway. This line has since gone on to Winton, no doubt to Robert Gray's happy relief, and has the name of being the best paying railway line in Queensland.

The country we had traversed between Townsville and Hughenden did not go through the best of pastoral country; it was only fit for cattle, and much of it rough at that, but then it was undoubtedly auriferous—Charters Towers, where we spent a night and had a good look at some of the deep level quartz mines, to wit.

From Hughenden we took coach across the big black soil plains following the heads of the Flinders watershed, and travelled through lightly stocked and richly grassed plains to Richmond Downs, and thence on to Cloncurry, a distance in all of over 200 miles from Hughenden, all of which was beautiful open sheep country, and most of it has proved since to be within the cretaceous or artesian area, such stations as Richmond Downs and Cambridge Downs, a big sheep property that adjoins it, then having been developed to their large grazing capabilities by numerous artesian bores giving flows of from 250,000 to 1,000,000 gallons of water a day, and none of them having a greater depth than 1,000 feet.

We had left Hughenden at daylight, and it took us three days to reach the Cloncurry, the monotony of our journey across these huge grassy plains being varied by bagging an occasional bustard, the Captain being a dead shot with either gun or rifle. As we neared the Cloncurry the plains ceased, and the country got disturbed and gave geological signs of being both auriferous and cupiferous.

A dozen years ago when I twice visited it, Cloncurry was a small township with a couple of inns, a bank, hospital, court house and lock-up. I presume it is much the same now, for Cloncurry and its district are still waiting for that long promised and once voted railway which the strong political interest of Eastern Queensland has always managed to block. For does not a railway from the mineral and pastoral districts of Cloncurry to the gulf port of Normanton mean a new and northern Queensland outlet to China, Japan, Batavia and Europe, with a week's shorter journey to reckon with?

Cloncurry has suffered ungrudgingly from this neglect ever since Ernest Henry's discovery of the big Cloncurry copper mine some twenty-five years ago, which first brought the district into notice and created the township. I well remember Ernest Henry riding over to Copperfield, near Clermont, after the discovery of the lode and looking me up at Wolfgang, with his pack bags full of copper specimens, some of which were virgin copper, which he was anxious to get tested at our neigh-

bouring copper mines, on the faith of a most favourable report of which he hurried to Brisbane and secured the land. A large company was formed to work the mine in England, but copper fell in value, and the difficulties of carriage proved too much for the undertaking and the mines were closed.

This original mine, with its outcrop that adjoins the township, rich as it has proved to be, is only one of a great many claims that have since been found and secured by English experts for capitalists who are only awaiting the passage of a Bill through Parliament to construct the railway from Normanton to Cloncurry at their expense and on terms exceedingly favourable to the Colony, as no land concessions I understand are involved. As the subject is so important to the future of this part of Queensland I will quote Ernest Henry's description of the mineral country that surrounds Cloncurry, which he knows so well, recently given to the reporter of the *Queenslander* newspaper in Brisbane, which I have every reason to know is substantially correct :

“From the Burke and Wills Rivers on the south to the Gregory River on the north, a distance of upwards of 200 miles, there is a continuous range of hills which form probably the largest extent of unbroken mineral country in Australia. These hills form the Mackinley and Cloncurry Ranges, and gold, silver, lead, antimony, iron and manganese are to be found in different portions of the ranges. The most valuable, if not the most

inherently precious of the metals, is copper, the wonderful deposits of which spread over the enormous area of 200 miles. Most of the copper lodes contain more or less gold, whilst many of them are not only extremely rich in high class ores, such as red oxide and green carbonates, malachite and grey ores, but are of very great width, ranging from a few feet up to 30 feet, 40 feet, and even 50 feet. The virgin copper, as if it was smelted, shows freely through some of the ore. A remarkable feature of some of the lodes is the very large outcrops they display, composed of huge boulders and masses of rich copper ores."

Mr. R. L. Jack, the late well-known Queensland Government geologist, speaks of one of these great lodes, the "Argylla," owned by the company proposing to build the railway in following terms:

"I venture to assert that any attempt at a description of this wonderful property must needs fail to give a full estimate of its richness and extent. The outcrop rises to a height of nearly 50 feet, and carries with it an immense lode of high percentage ores throughout its entire length.

"It is understood that there is abundance of iron and calcepars to act as flux, and also suitable clay to make fire bricks, but there is a lack of cheap fuel, which can only be obtained by a railway."

I have stood myself at Cloncurry on the outcrop of the old original forsaken mine, and have seen the light of the evening sun glittering on the

metallic ore of a conical hill, a short distance from the township, which I was told was a mass of iron ore of very high percentage. The cabbages grown in the Chinamen's gardens by the creek at Cloncurry are of a very vivid green, owing to the cupiferous nature of the soil.

Such are the future mineral attractions of Cloncurry.

As we go along I will deal with the pastoral resources of the country on the watersheds of the Wills and Burke and Georgina, the development of which awaits this railway to the Gulf. Vast plains clothed with the richest grasses and those of fattening descriptions, such as the Mitchell, Barley and Flinders grasses, which stand hard seasons and put the live stock in condition to stand the long drives to market.

The Captain and myself and our manager, who met us, did not delay long in Cloncurry, but started to drive the 140 miles that divided us from Carandotta on the Georgina, which we did in three easy days. The first fifty miles of the road was through very auriferous-looking country, after which we came on to the rich plains of Moonah Creek, which seemed unbounded in their extent and stretched like a sea before us. On arrival at Carandotta we were treated to comfortable beds in a good stone house with a ten feet wide verandah round it, and ate about the best corned beef for dinner that we thought we had ever tasted.



Carandotta owned a double frontage of 55 miles to the Georgina River, and it did not lack water for that distance in the biggest drought, for there were plenty of permanent water-holes in the river of more than a mile in length, Lake Buchanan being over four miles and the "Wokabah" hole over 14 miles in length, this last probably the largest natural water-hole in Western Queensland. These holes teemed with fish and wild fowl. There was no natural water off the river that lasted any time, but water in wells was procurable at about 100 feet. Artesian boring had been tried without success up to 1,000 feet only.

The country held by the syndicate that owned the leases of the property was over 4,000 square miles, or nearly three millions of acres in extent; it was all first-class, being undulating plains of black or chocolate loam covered in average seasons with the best fattening grasses of the western country and plenty of saltbush big and small to boot, so that sheep thrived remarkably well and grew fine wool. The annual rainfall for the seven or eight years we grazed it only amounted however to a little over ten inches, or less than half that of the country we had held at Aramac; still the grasses on Carandotta had remarkably sustaining qualities. We should not have kept sheep on the country had we not pinned our faith upon the vote that had been passed for the construction of the railway from Normanton to the Cloncurry, and when that vote and promise were

inoperative it was too late to draw back, and we found that at the low prices of wool that ruled between 1884 and 1894 it was difficult to make sheep pay at such a distance from port and with the high wages that ruled in outside country.

In 1892 a terrible season swept the Georgina district, and Carandotta lost 90,000 sheep and 10,000 cattle by drought, a disaster from which unfortunately, perhaps, the syndicate that owned the property did not seek to recover themselves. The manager was caught in a trap and was unable to get the stock away, all routes being closed.

Disasters such as these, though not common, are in Queensland by no means singular, when you get entirely cut off from grass or water and the stock routes become closed up. Of late years, the western railways in Queensland have been extensively used for moving sheep and cattle from parched-up localities to districts, chiefly nearer the coast, that have had a more fortunate rainfall. As these otherwise fine districts get more closely settled and worked up there can be no doubt that additional cheap railway lines must be resorted to for moving stock, and thus act as some safeguard to the terrible losses by droughts that of late years have become so frequent.

There is another provision that is bound to be brought into more use by owners of large sheep stations in droughty districts, and that is the cropping in favourable seasons of huge reserves of hay, that

can be held against these droughts. It means a big business to provide hay for thousands and thousands of sheep, but it is to be done, and it is a wonder that up to the last few years this particular remedy for serious loss by drought has been so much neglected. Talk of cruelty to animals on a large scale, what can compare to the slow lingering death of thousands of sheep and cattle which their owners have called into existence?

The Georgina was formerly called the Herbert River, but "place aux dames" was afterwards shown, and the Herbert was rechristened the Georgina, after Governor Kennedy's daughter, in the same way that the Diamantina, another big western Queensland watercourse, was given the Christian name of Lady Bowen. These rivers, it must be well understood, big as they are in flood time, are mostly dry water-courses with occasional water-holes big and small; none of them run permanently even at their so-called sources.

The Georgina takes its head under Barklays tableland, about 130 miles north of Carandotta; but its main tributaries, the Rankin and the Lorne, are within the northern territory of South Australia, the Georgina taking a bend of some 30 miles into that colony above Carandotta, where the Rankin joins it. When this fine country on the Georgina attracted attention twenty years ago, the Government of South Australia put up to auction the leases of a large tract of country on the watersheds of the Rankin



SCENE ON DIAMANTINA LAKES, WESTERN QUEENSLAND.



and Lorne and obtained very high prices for it ; but in due course the distance from port and high rates of carriage brought the result that the high-priced leases were allowed to lapse and fresh ones have been, and can now be, obtained from the South Australian Government at a price far below that demanded by the Queensland Government for country of similar class and on the same watershed, and with a longer lease.

It is very foolish on the part of any Government to lose or fail to attract a good tenant by the imposition of impossible rents ; and on that account the Queensland Government have at last in view a measure of relief for their pastoral tenants in the far west, the result of a recent inspection by their most experienced officials, which should result in the more permanent development of the excellent country on the watersheds of the Burke, Wills, Hamilton and Georgina, as well as that of the coastal watersheds that lie between the Georgina and the Gulf. There is a sufficient stretch of country in the areas I have named to afford scope for future colonisation in both Queensland and the Northern Territory, especially if some central outlet for same is found on the western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and it might well become a matter of rivalry between South Australia and Queensland as to which of these vast colonies offered the most tempting terms for settlement. The fact remains, however, that though much of this country is fattening land

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equal to anything in Australia, the yearly rainfall is small, though it increases as it gets near the coast, but in no case is the fall too small to debar pastoral settlement absolutely ; there is also this to be said, that prices of produce and stock with the commencement of the twentieth century are distinctly showing a return to the prices that first induced the settlement of this country.

We spent most of the month of July in inspecting Carandotta, the temperature of this Queensland mid-winter month so far inland being perfect ; and although the season was undoubtedly dry, and the only drawback was the dread of bush fires, all the live stock was in excellent condition.

At the time of our visit Carandotta carried on not a large portion of its area something under 100,000 sheep, 800 horses, and 20,000 cattle. The sheep were kept on the south-eastern portion of the run, where the country was of the richest description and water was obtainable well back from the river by sinking wells ; there it was merely a question of fencing in more country and sinking more wells as you wanted room for the increase. The sheep were in capital order and the lambs well grown ; the wool a bit wanting in yolk, still dense enough for all purposes.

The cattle were carried on the north-western side of the property, the cattle station being not very far from our then solitary township on the Georgina, Urandangie. The herd, which had always had a



good foundation, were especially satisfactory in condition and quality, and I was not sorry to be present at the start of a very fine mob of 1,000 bullocks for the Sydney market. They were drawn out, I recollect, when I inspected them quite in regimental array on a big plain, where they were licking up the dainty Flinders grass, the succulent shoots of which had dried up and lay scattered on the ground.

Alas! however, for the results. This fine mob, after a journey of four or five months, were sold on the boundary of Victoria at a price which, expenses paid, only netted 17s. a head. So much for the price of store cattle at that period. The horses, though flat in their feet, had developed wonderful size and bone, the draught stock being especially massive; I attributed their growth to the rich saline pastures *ad libitum* since their foaling, and their bone a good deal to the limestone ridges they frequented not far back from the river frontage. So far as the condition and well-doing of the live stock went, therefore, the Georgina country left nothing to be desired, and compared favourably with any I had ever seen in that respect; all that it wanted was an easier rate of carriage to port and better prices for produce; as far as the country went its unstinted breadth and richness communicated itself to all the stock.

We wound up our stay on the Georgina by a camp at Roxborough, the station below us, and a day's shooting and fishing at the big "Wokabah"

waterhole, where mussels for bait were in plenty, and good fat bream and yellow-bellies could be pulled up nearly as fast as the line was thrown in. The Captain and his brother did capital execution on the ducks, which were driven by the black boys, and flew up and down the big water in large mobs.

We drove back at the end of July to Cloncurry, the same way we had come, camping a night at Rochdale with a detachment of the native police. I was sorry to part at Cloncurry with the gallant Captain, whose leave was drawing to an end and who had made up his mind to return direct, *via* Townsville, to Europe, whilst I continued my more adventurous trip down the Leichardt, where we had another cattle property, and so on to Normanton.

Before I left Cloncurry I was glad to renew my acquaintance with Ernest Henry. I got also some twenty ounces of rough shotty gold, as specimens of the production of the goldfield, from a lot of a thousand ounces the bank manager had bought up in the past six months from "fossickers" round the township. To look at that gold was undoubtedly to believe there was "more where that came from," yet the Cloncurry as a goldfield has so far been a failure; it is bound, however, to do better with its copper.

Our manager had started me for the Gulf with a good outfit, giving me his buggy with several changes of horses, a good all-round man and a black boy to pilot me along the little used track

that crossed the roughish country from Cloncurry to the Leichardt River. My first stage was Fort Constantine and my second Clonagh, where Mr. Reid told me he carried 65,000 sheep and 9,000 cattle on 650 square miles of country with good improvements; from there I had a rough drive across the dividing range to the Leichardt River, which for grass and water cannot be beaten as cattle country. I had a couple of camps on the Leichardt, enjoying to the full some swims in the splendid sheets of water that distinguish that pebbly stream; and this brought me to Augustus Downs, a property our syndicate held in conjunction with Carandotta.

My stay at Augustus Downs was not long, being sufficient to plan out the work, after inspecting the excellent herd of cattle and a tract of closely grassed and abundantly watered country, just one-tenth of the extent of Carandotta. It was a jolly little run, however, no waste country about it, and possessed the very unusual advantage of being watered to its full grazing capacity, not by dams or wells, but by the river and natural lagoons; this gave the run a great advantage as a breeding place, as calves and their mothers never got away too far from water in this hot part of Queensland. I started for Floraville on August 2nd, *viâ* Pomerania Downs, where Mr. Robert Doyle had an excellent feast ready in my honour. At Floraville I camped for the first time on the tidal waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the innkeeper telling me he had just

lost a good draught mare from the attack of an alligator, that had bitten her wind-pipe out as she was grazing close to the water's edge.

At Floraville I left the Leichardt and its splendid grass and water, and travelled a couple of days across flat and uninteresting marine plains, which brought me to Normanton, the small capital of the Gulf country.

I was glad to get there without accident or breaking a strap over the rough roads and bad crossings that distinguish the Gulf country. The road I followed down the Leichardt is not presumably the one destined to be taken by the Cloncurry railway line, but if it was, I saw no engineering difficulties to get over, and I understand the surveyed line is much the same.

Normanton, a dozen years ago, was a well laid out town, with, however, only an odd house here and there to mark its broad streets. It has been built on a well-drained ironstone ridge, at a point of the tortuous Norman River, where the tide rises to a sufficient height to ensure its navigation by small craft; it is no better or no worse than Brisbane and Rockhampton before their river approaches were dredged out, and a good deal better than Townsville, which has swallowed a million of money and is still wanting a proper harbour.

Since my visit there, Normanton has got a railway, but not the one it wanted. The half-a-million that was voted for the Cloncurry line still

stands, I understand, to the credit of that vote, but as a matter of fact the money itself was really spent on the line to the Croydon goldfield, which I have not seen and therefore cannot describe, nor can I speak personally of the growth of Normanton since the Croydon Railway was built, but I should say that it must be considerable.

I note by my diary that on 7th August, 1888, the projected Cloncurry railway had so far been commenced at Normanton that, as an old parliamentarian, I was asked to accompany Mr. Frew on an engine from the river wharf some four or five miles over the new line, and examine the patent steel sleepers Mr. Engineer Phillips had introduced, and which seemed serviceable and useful in a country where the white ant is destructive to wooden sleepers, or indeed to woodwork of any description.

As a Gulf outlet for the Queensland trans-continental line, of which the inland termini will be Cloncurry, Winton, Longreach and Charleville, Normanton is certain to play an important part in the roll of Queensland ports. Once the mineral resources of the Cloncurry, and the pastoral wealth of the country to the east, south and west of it, are tapped by a railroad, the fortunes of that part of Queensland are bound to be as well assured as those of its eastern coast, which has hitherto taken such good care of itself.

After a useful stay of a week in Normanton I

shipped myself in the s.s. *Victoria* to Thursday Island, where I looked up my old friend, Hugh Milman, the then resident of this important calling place, and thence I steamed down the Queensland coast to Brisbane, having as one of my travelling companions the Government geologist, Mr. R. L. Jack, with whom the rapid development of Queensland's mining resources will ever be intimately connected. From Thursday Island to Brisbane, travelling in the calm, bright winter of semi-tropical Queensland, and touching at Cooktown, Cairns, Townsville, Bowen, Mackay and Rockhampton, I felt proud of being an old Queenslander and of being still concerned in the settlement of a colony the resources of which are so varied and progressive.

On my return to Brisbane, and before I left it, a number of friends and other colonists interested in the construction of the Cloncurry Railway secured an interview with the then Minister of Railways (the Hon. H. M. Nelson) to urge the commencement of an undertaking so obviously favourable to the welfare of the country. Every reasonable argument was used by the deputation, and we were told in reply that we had made out a fair case, and that our request would be placed in a favourable light before the Cabinet. The chief reason given by the Minister against our petition was the fearful amount of liabilities the Ministry then in power had inherited from their predecessors, which was, to say the least of it, a "robbing Peter to pay Paul"



argument, difficult to explain. I was not sorry, however, to have been able to speak on that occasion from recent and personal knowledge of a district which has such a future before it; and when I returned to England I had every hope that the future of our railway was assured, but it never came off, and the district has consequently stagnated.

My next visit to Australia was in 1893-1894, and again on that occasion to inspect pastoral properties. The financial outlook at that period had been so deplorable, and so many of my friends had been affected by it in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, that a visit to those towns could not be a very cheerful one. The Australian colonies, however, survived this severe crisis, and met the situation with resolute economy, both public and private, the result of which is that their resources are growing fast, and in Queensland, as announced by its Agent-General, Sir Horace Tozer, the other day in London, in an able paper bristling with assurances of the prosperity of that colony, the exports of 1898 had exceeded those of 1897 by no less than £1,853,000, their total value being £10,000,000, and this, too, after a droughty year.

It is a grand country that is bound to flourish, though it may lack a Rhodes to develop its extreme resources; still, there may be truth in the Italian adage, *Qui va piano va lontano*. At any rate, the humble writer of these pages never regrets the many years he has spent in good old Queensland.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A SHORT VISIT IN 1893-1894 TO ALBANY, PERTH, ADELAIDE, MELBOURNE, SYDNEY, BRISBANE.

ALTHOUGH the year 1892 had been a drouthy season in the extreme west, both of New South Wales and Queensland, this year had seen the numbers of merino sheep in those great stock-raising colonies rise to their highest point, namely, to about sixty millions in New South Wales and twenty-five millions in Queensland. These top numbers were destined from 1894 to a gradual declension, the result of the prolonged drought over these pastoral colonies, which has now lasted to the end of the nineteenth century, and which is still only partially relieved. So that at the end of 1892 sheep were at their lowest price ; ewes could be got for 2s. 6d. and 3s., wethers much about the same, and merino wool was at low level prices.

Thus old stagers that had grown up with the country of their adoption, shook their heads and said the blessed country was over-stocked, whilst those who dealt in real estate and dwelt in towns began to say that the country was over-banked and too much credit afforded to speculators in the various land

booms that, like diluted Mississippi schemes, sprang up about this time around the capitals of the bigger colonies of the Australian continent.

Over-stocking was soon checked by a diminishing rainfall which has enormously, but it is trusted not permanently, reduced the carrying capacity of the country. With the over-banking and easy credit the rope was a good deal shorter, and some three months at the end of 1892, and four at the beginning of 1893, were enough to prick the bubble and bring down the inflation, reducing again to a normal level the disturbed current of Australian finance.

'Tis best not to dwell now on the damage done and hardships experienced, universal as these undoubtedly presented themselves to both dwellers in the land and visitors to the old country; but disasters were met with the greatest vigour and pluck, including all kinds of personal privations, that brought into relief those characteristics of the Australian race lately so brightly evinced on the battle grounds of South Africa. Australians are quick to recover and very hard to overcome.

It was under these Australian conditions that an old squatting friend and myself were asked to visit New South Wales and Queensland towards the end of 1893 to appraise the present and future of a number of pastoral properties, the results from which are so apt to depend, besides the management, on the price of the produce and on the run of seasons. So we got away in October for a six

months' trip, during which much came under our practised consideration that helps to form a final chapter not uninteresting to the reader of pages which began with "very early days."

We found of course, that the fine fleet of the P. and O. had increased in tonnage during the past five years, the four comfortable Jubilee ships of 1887 having been followed by still bigger vessels such as the *Himalaya* and *Australia*, and we were well content to find ourselves on the former of the last two with once more dear old Julius Orman as commander. So we sped quickly and comfortably to Albany, where we landed in record time for a fortnight's stay in Western Australia.

I rubbed my eyes at Albany, up to so recently a dull roadstead chiefly celebrated for sand and wild flowers, but now showing strong signs of speculative expansion, the reflex of the nascent Coolgardie, and bidding fair to drop the character of the erstwhile fishing village where travelling new chums used to recruit from the scanty native blacks their armoury of native weapons.

Albany had, since I saw it last, become the terminus of the Midland Railway, which boasts of an excellent 3 ft. 6 in. narrow-gauge line, the smoothest perhaps of all the Australian lines. This line took you in two half days, for the train camped for the night at a fairly comfortable stopping place, to Perth, the capital of West Australia, formerly the old Swan River settlement.

The country travelled through was singularly free from agricultural or other settlement, and showed more than an ordinary quantity of sandy scrub. The wild flowers, however, were a feature of this part of the Western colony, something, but not much, to enliven the dull monotony of a landscape that took in a tableland sandy and treeless, beyond stunted specimens of the everlasting gum family. The scenery, however, improved as it neared the ranges that divide Perth from the table land, and one or two of the stopping places, such as York, indicated to the traveller the neighbourhood of considerable agricultural development. In West Australia some land fit for the plough exists, but it is little and far between, and that fact is soon impressed upon you between Albany and Perth.

Soon after we got to the top of the main range and before we began its descent into the watershed of the Swan River, my old friend Amherst (of Montreal Kent) stepped into the carriage from his vineyard siding, hale and hearty, with a decidedly English greeting of welcome; and from that till luncheon, which he kindly asked me to eat with him as a guest in the refreshment room of his Legislative Council, with some other worthy representatives of the best interests of West Australia, we were engrossed in conversation having reference to the great start the recent gold discoveries had given to the colony of our good friend's adoption. And no man seemed to know the country better,

or better to be known and appreciated in it, than the keen old Kentish Zingari, who had a good word for everybody and who made the conditions of life in West Australia admirably endurable.

Perth owes its pretty situation to a sweeping though somewhat shallow estuary of the Swan River, which, at a few miles' distance from its seaport entrance of Fremantle, forms a noble bend on the rising shores of which the capital of West Australia is now rapidly growing into a city. Perth will always have the fresh and pleasant elements of navigation that a good sheet of water brings with it, but the commercial development stops, and is intended to stop, at Fremantle, where the harbour and the wharves are being rapidly extended to prepare for the arrival of the mail steamers, which must soon cut out the transport of inland supplies by the Midland Railway from Albany, and limit that line to timber and passenger traffic.

Perth must have altered wonderfully since I saw it at the end of 1893, which was before Kalgoorlie had set its seal on the richness and permanence of West Australian gold-fields; but even then English investors were busy buying up City allotments, and syndicates were being formed for the purchase of suburban lands, the proprietors of which had never dreamed, under former conditions, the value these waste lands would so soon attain.

The future of Fremantle, as colonial seaports go,

is bound to be a very considerable one, as it has not only become the terminus of Coolgardie and neighbouring gold-fields, but must also become that of the extension to Adelaide, which is bound to follow and some day to connect the whole of the overland traffic of the Australian continent. Fremantle will then discharge the mails and most of the passenger traffic from the great lines that trade from Europe and the Cape with Australia, and if the long railway line at the back of the Great Australian Bight takes some making, we know how quickly Englishmen have covered the sandy wastes from Cairo to Khartoum.

Plenty of time and plenty of population are required by West Australia more than any of the older colonies to develop its resources; for though she can claim no soil like the Western country and Gipps Land in Victoria, the Liverpool Plains and the Hunter in New South Wales, or the Darling Downs and Barcoo in Queensland, her territory comprises a vast area of country, a tithe of which only has she so far been able thoroughly to explore.

She possesses the first great desideratum of an equable climate, dry and healthy, which goes a long way; and if her gold discoveries during the next ten years come up to the finds of the last seven or eight, the country will no doubt do great things, amongst which will be the provision of ample vegetables, fresh meat and fruit to the gold-fields

population that have now to pay so dearly for them.

During my short stay in Perth I renewed my acquaintance with some old friends in Sir William Robinson, Sir Alick Onslow and Sir John Forrest, who hospitably received me. The first, one of a distinguished family of pro-consuls, has, alas ! passed away in the meridian of his useful life ; the last two are flourishing in the tenure of their weighty responsibilities, Sir Alick fulfilling the judicial traditions of his Surrey ancestry, and the veteran Premier, Sir John Forrest, remaining an example and proof that the privations and hardships of Australian exploration have in no way curtailed his career of practical usefulness to the colony, the growth of which he, more than any other, has helped to stimulate.

Perth is not outdone by other Australian capitals in the possession of a good club. That matter was taken early in hand under the *régime* of the last of the West Australian Crown Governors, Sir Frederick Weld, after whom it is called the Weld Club. It has become a most comfortable resting-place for accredited visitors ; everything is well and inexpensively done, and you are noiselessly waited upon by John Chinaman, in native garb and pigtail. Built in an excellent situation facing the Swan River, you are almost dazzled from the verandahs by its glittering wavelets, and you can also look out into the gardens of Government House, which has an equally



fine situation. From these comforts we were loth to turn our backs in order to catch the fortnightly P. and O. steamer at Albany. The return railway journey from Perth, on a lovely November day of dazzling Australian brilliancy, showing no fresh features of interest except, perhaps, a better view, as we passed it, of Lord Brassey's West Australian estate, which looks somewhat of an oasis in the desert.

We caught one of the comfortable Jubilee ships, and made a capital trip to Melbourne, after our regulation stay at Adelaide, which I had so often visited before at different epochs of its progress. The landing at Adelaide strikes you always as somewhat hot and arid, but the city is undoubtedly well built, solid, and wholesome. Some day Adelaide may get an ocean harbour, which it badly wants, but it has never been specially eager to dredge out a crack shipping port. South Australia has one of the best harbours in Australia at the northern end of her big slice of the continent, in the port of Palmerston in the Northern Territory; and with the development of that country and the progress of the Trans-continental Railway from Adelaide to same, the colony and her statesmen have a big task in hand.

South Australia could well afford to cut off its Northern Territory and allow it to form another, and that a Crown Colony, to start with; but this would mean working with coloured labour, and that would rouse the old fear of the dreaded invasion from China and Japan, which has ever been somewhat of

a threat to Northern Australia. Generally speaking, Australia is most anxious to open out in China and Japan markets for her produce, and no doubt she will get them in time, but she could not afford to give the *quid pro quo* of a general influx of Chinese and Japanese, whose pushing ways are an old story and well understood. So the northern coasts are jealously guarded against the settlement of a coloured race which, however useful at the start, would probably become dangerous in the end. The solution of this important question to Northern Australia will no doubt come in good time; meanwhile it is good for a tropical district to remember to avoid fighting against nature, and not to expect advantageously to settle the northern coast of Australia with a European population only. Many years ago, talking to an Anglo-Australian statesman, whose mature experience warranted the expression of such an opinion, he said there was the making of a glorious Crown Colony in that portion of Australia that lay north of the 20th degree of latitude, but that he believed the country it included required Asiatic labour, and would never have its resources properly developed without it.

From Adelaide we were not long getting to Melbourne, and threaded once more our way through Port Philip Heads and its well buoyed channel to Williamstown, with its forest of masts; whence we soon made our way to the Melbourne Club, a haven of rest where the inter-colonial visitor, as well as the

globe trotter with the usual credentials, is made ever comfortable and welcome. From this out we spent a busy month in Melbourne, strictly occupied with matters concerning our mission.

Melbourne had not recovered the lethargy that follows such a staggering blow as her financial institutions had received; there were evidences of that everywhere, and many of those delightful houses that make her suburbs possibly the best laid-out and the most enjoyable in Her Majesty's dominions, were tenantless or in the hands of a caretaker. This made the hospitalities of those that had escaped pressure all the more valuable and conspicuous. The excellent system of tramways continued running, but carried a very much smaller number of travellers, and I was told that the population of Melbourne had dwindled down by one-fifth, and that the tramway shares that had formed such an excellent investment had ceased to pay a dividend. Conversation at the Clubs, and elsewhere, was bound greatly to dwell on dismal subjects connected with the past crisis; and whereas some few years ago Australian Bank investments, whether by the way of fixed deposits or the more risky shares, had always been recommended as absolutely the best and perhaps the safest Australian investment going, this extraordinary *volte face* had worked a complete change and destroyed a confidence which, it is only fair to say, has in the short space of the last six or seven years been almost completely restored.

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Victoria is a wonderful country ; the rabbits that used to ruin her squatters are now turned into profit by regular exportation ; her rich pastures are equal to any in the world for the production of butter, which almost equals that of the best Danish article, and the ever active Victorian is now inspecting the dairies in Denmark with a view of making use of the experience of the older country ; Victoria retaining, however, the enormous advantage of an almost winterless climate. Eggs and poultry are being largely imported into the London market, and the English cry is for more. Victorian vineyards have a great name, and deservedly so, for were they not planted mostly by vine-growers of celebrity ? The produce of these vineyards is eagerly bought up and those who are fortunate enough to possess some of the old St. Hubert or Yering wines in their cellar are fortunate. What pleasanter occupation can there be for the small capitalist than to possess a vineyard on the slopes of the Yarra, and combine with the same a little dairying ? These form occupations quite as independent and perhaps superior in climate and social attraction to the grazing farms of Western Queensland, which are at present drawing away those young Victorians who want more scope for their operations. Nowhere in the world has the power of rapid centralisation shown itself more than in the growth of Melbourne, especially taking in view the indiffer-

ence of its port and the limit of its "back country." It is the climate and the soil that have done it—soil that is sold in parts of the Western country at £40 an acre, and in large blocks in Gipp's Land at £10 to £20. No wonder that the land booms occasionally in such a country—a country that can draw 300,000 people to its capital in sixty years and show no signs of decadence, but merely the history of one comparatively recent, and I feel very certain, wholesome check.

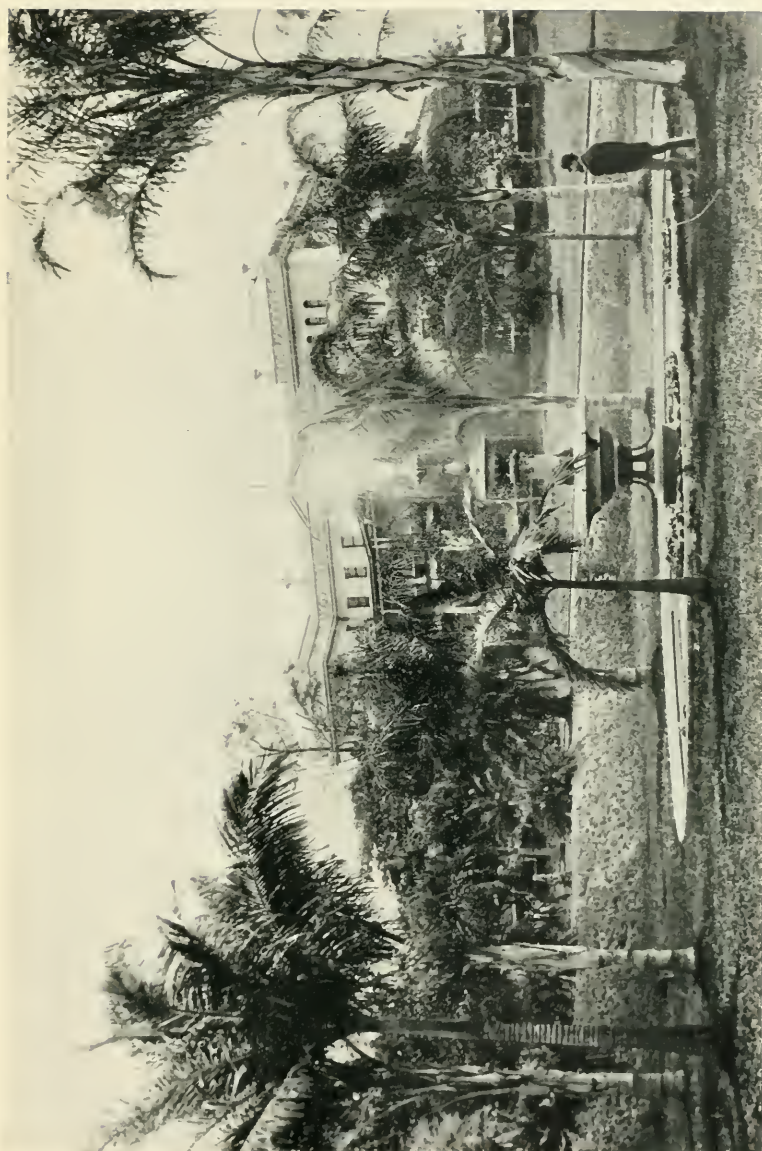
Instead of going by rail we preferred continuing our journey to Sydney by steamer. Dear old Sydney is often and early alluded to in these pages; and as we entered the familiar harbour there seemed to be more steamers, big and small, than ever, threshing its waters in making their way to the various resorts that either for pleasure or residence are extending the navigation of Port Jackson. On a sudden arrival, after some years of absence, I was struck with how totally different the nature of the population in Sydney is to that of Melbourne. The Victorian is fresh, alert, and hardly ever indolent; bigger, ruddier and bulkier, more venturesome, and irritable probably, also. The Sydney native is cooler, paler and more cautious, less careful in his dress, looking more indolent but really not so, thinner but with equal muscle, adoring the sea yet a born horseman. It is hard to say which makes the best colonist, but a blend of the two, and that in the service of the old mother country, make a soldier hard to beat,

and will some day furnish armies that will, as they say, have to be reckoned with.

We found that in Sydney the financial crisis had been far less pronounced and harmful, and that the accumulated wealth of a few previous generations had come to the scratch, and, in most cases, saved the situation, the extra caution of the New South Welshman standing him in good stead. The old Hawkesbury, or Windsor settler, who for perhaps fifty years had hitched up his gig or his horse at the posts before the old Bank of New South Wales in George Street, still did so, and that with a confidence that had never been shaken; his wide-brimmed hat and rough clothes might be less smart than the Melbourne man's, but probably his balance in the coffers of the old bank was considerably greater. So Sydney has, no doubt, the privilege of age and experience, with undoubtedly less speculation and, if she had to bear the brunt of some painful early struggles, it is well she should profit by them now and reap the fruits of that caution that age is said to bring with it.

In five years, and those rather critical ones, I did not expect to find any startling developments in the Sydney world—social or commercial. Some of the bigger private residences, originally built in days when colonists were content to enjoy the fruition of their good fortune in the capital of their colony, stood empty, the result possibly of absenteeism as much as of hard times. On the





QUEENSLAND CLUB, BRISBANE.





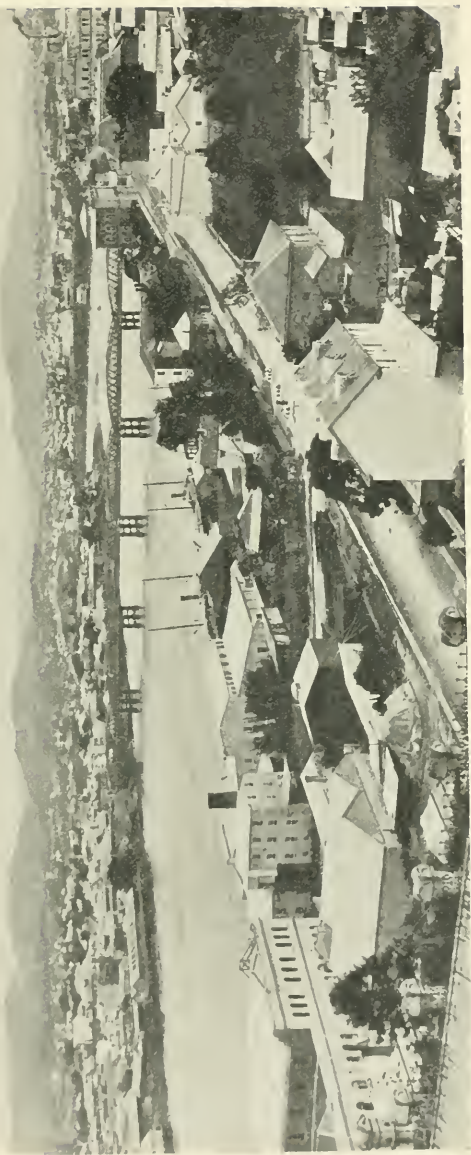
other hand, the business part of the city seemed to be enriching itself with costly monuments of American or German enterprise, and land in George Street seemed dearer than ever. Government buildings in Sydney are, unfortunately, isolated; and though individually magnificent, they lose the effect they would otherwise have if they could, placed together, adorn some mighty square like those of Bombay or Washington. This early mistake will always tell against the beauty of Sydney as a city, but this can hardly warrant the, I'm told, proposed extravagance of building for Federal purposes another set of magnificent public offices at Orange, Bathurst, or any other proposed inland town.

I left Sydney for Brisbane in the glowing heat of its midsummer, and, as I was recovering from an attack of influenza, I was not sorry to get to the brisker atmosphere of the capital of Queensland, which had always agreed with me. I was glad to put up once more at the Queensland Club, which we were to make our headquarters for a time, and as my date of membership there was from the very early sixties, I felt at home under its comfortable verandahs, looking out once more on the familiar scene of the Houses of Parliament and Botanical Gardens. I saw at once the financial crisis had been more severely and generally felt in the Brisbane community than perhaps by that of either Melbourne or Sydney. The friends I met, alas! had mostly suffered; the style of living everywhere

was very quiet, and people took high tea instead of dinner (not a bad thing either), Queensland having the great advantage of allowing you to reduce your establishment without fuss or loss of prestige. Happy community that possesses that privilege, which Old England certainly loses by lacking.

The Government was going strong, and its credit was good, and if its finances had suffered during the crisis, and that in quarters that ought to have been secure from attack, the sources of revenue were not only intact, but full of promise for the future. There had, however, been a grim experience, as it is ever the most distant arteries in banking that have to suffer in a pinch; outside securities are always the first to be called in, and must suffer accordingly, and they did so in Queensland to a heavy extent. Finally, the banks that stood up took the cream of the business from those that didn't, and I presume they have it still. So a visit to Brisbane in January, 1894, was not a wholly unalloyed pleasure. It was, however, comforting to meet everywhere the youngsters of the new generation—active, sober, hardy, simple; they seemed given to every kind of athletics, the considerable heat notwithstanding. But as there is no enervation in the climate of Southern Queensland, the youth of the colony do not suffer physically or mentally, to wit, the sound and tough scholars and athletes its schools and playgrounds are turning out.

The various Meat Works, to which I have alluded



BRISBANE, 1898, FROM PARLIAMENT HOUSES.



in a previous chapter on the "Cattle Industry," were all in full swing, and the real happy men seemed to be those who were able periodically to pop into the Meat Works the fat stock grown on the various selections and stations within fair reach of them. The frozen meat trade, for beef at any rate, in Queensland had fairly "taken on," and, as I write, some six years after the visit I describe, I may say that the meat trade is proving itself a splendid resource, and fully coming up to the widest prospects ever thought of at its inception. For have not China, Japan, Manila, and South Africa to be added to the great European outlets for frozen meat? And the question will soon be, can Queensland supply the demand? The writer, who, in its early days, helped in his way to push the frozen meat trade, can only say that he feels no doubt that Queensland now affords a certainty in the profitable export, at any rate, of beef, and that, therefore, the cattle industry in Queensland is on a sounder footing for investment than it has been for half a generation past.

I was sorry not to be able to go further north and visit my old haunts, but southern engagements would not allow it, and midsummer is never a very good time to pay a visit to Northern Queensland, unless you are obliged to.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE PEEL RIVER.

I HAD arranged, before I left England, with my colleagues in the directorate of the Peel River Company, to visit if possible the Company's estate near Tamworth, New South Wales, a property which alike for climate, rainfall, production of fine wool, and last, but not least, good management, compared and compares favourably in its results with any pastoral property in wide Australia.

I was glad to have as a companion for my visit my old friend, Mr. Joe Bell, M.L.A. for Dalby, the son of Sir Joshua P. Bell, one of Queensland's earliest and most valued colonists. Mr. Bell was young and a practised bushman, so he put in a pleasant week at the Peel, riding with the ladies of the station, whilst I was engaged in the more serious work of inspection.

We were met at Tamworth railway station by Mr. George King, the manager under his father, and were driven out to Goonoo Goonoo, the head station, some fifteen miles, in quick time; and after hot Sydney and Brisbane I never experienced a more refreshing change than the bracing air of the



## THE PEEL RIVER.

Peel at an altitude of 1,400 feet, and a rapid drive through its varied country. There was the usual shower bath at the end of the day, the pleasant family supper, the home-grown food, and piles of rich grapes and a variety of fruits, then (February) at their best. There are stations and stations, but for climate and comfort, and look of thrifty welfare, give me "The Peel."

Our inspection began in earnest, chiefly on wheels but a good deal also on horseback, any fatigue being of little account to an old squatter when he had to inspect a perfectly managed estate in a fair season and everything in apple-pie order, nothing going to waste or going down hill, for squatting is given to rude shocks and grievous disappointments :

A drought may sweep away your stock, rendering your best laid schemes of no value.

Your lambing may be lost from above causes, after you have reckoned on a good increase.

Your wool may meet a falling or fallen market and net a price at which it will not pay you to grow it.

And lastly, you may from these causes or any of them get into financial trouble.

The Peel River Estate fortunately is not troubled with any of the above serious drawbacks. Droughts are unknown, as the property, a freehold estate of 300,000 acres, lies on an undulating plateau surrounded by the main Liverpool Range, which

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attracts a certain rainfall of over 25 inches per annum, generally more, only two years in thirty having fallen below that average.

The lambings are regular, generally averaging (turned out to lamb in paddocks) between 70 and 80 per cent.

The wool never meets a really bad market, being of a description that almost always secures the highest price for that class of wool, and is much sought after by continental buyers.

Lastly, financial troubles are unknown to the Company, as both a reserve and depreciation fund co-operate in securing the stability of the concern.

Moreover, the property has the great advantage of easy, rapid and cheap carriage by rail to Sydney, and it is also within easy distance of the same market for stock.

It may here be noted that the sheep carried on the Peel River Company's properties fluctuate between 200,000 and 240,000, and that the cattle herd, which is carried in the Goonoo Goonoo sheep paddocks and is an excellent source of revenue, some of its fat bullocks having recently fetched £9 10s. a head, numbers from 7,500 to 9,000 head.

Many of the advantages and gifts above mentioned are more or less natural ones, but they are strongly supplemented by admirable colonial management, which began at the inception of the Company over 40 years ago, when the present general manager, the Honourable Philip Gidley King, M.L.C., took charge of the estate, which has ever since been managed on the same lines ; continuity of management, when



THE PEEL RIVER ESTATE—HOMESTEAD BUILDINGS.



that is good, being one of the greatest desiderata in the breeding up of a good flock.

It is not uninteresting to allude here to the growth of a leading colonial family such as Mr. King's and to its eminent public services in the cause of Australian colonisation. Mr. King's grandfather, who was the third governor of New South Wales, 1800-1806, served in the navy, and as Lieutenant of the *Sirius* arrived with the first fleet in Botany Bay in 1788; soon after there arrived the French squadron under the command of La Perouse, when King, on account of his knowledge of French, was made by Governor Philip the medium of communication between the two squadrons. King was next sent by Governor Philip to colonise Norfolk Island, where he gave such satisfaction, that on his return to England he was sent out with a commission as Lieutenant-Governor of Norfolk Island, from which, in September, 1800, he was appointed to the Governorship of New South Wales in succession to Governor Hunter, who had succeeded the first Governor Philip.

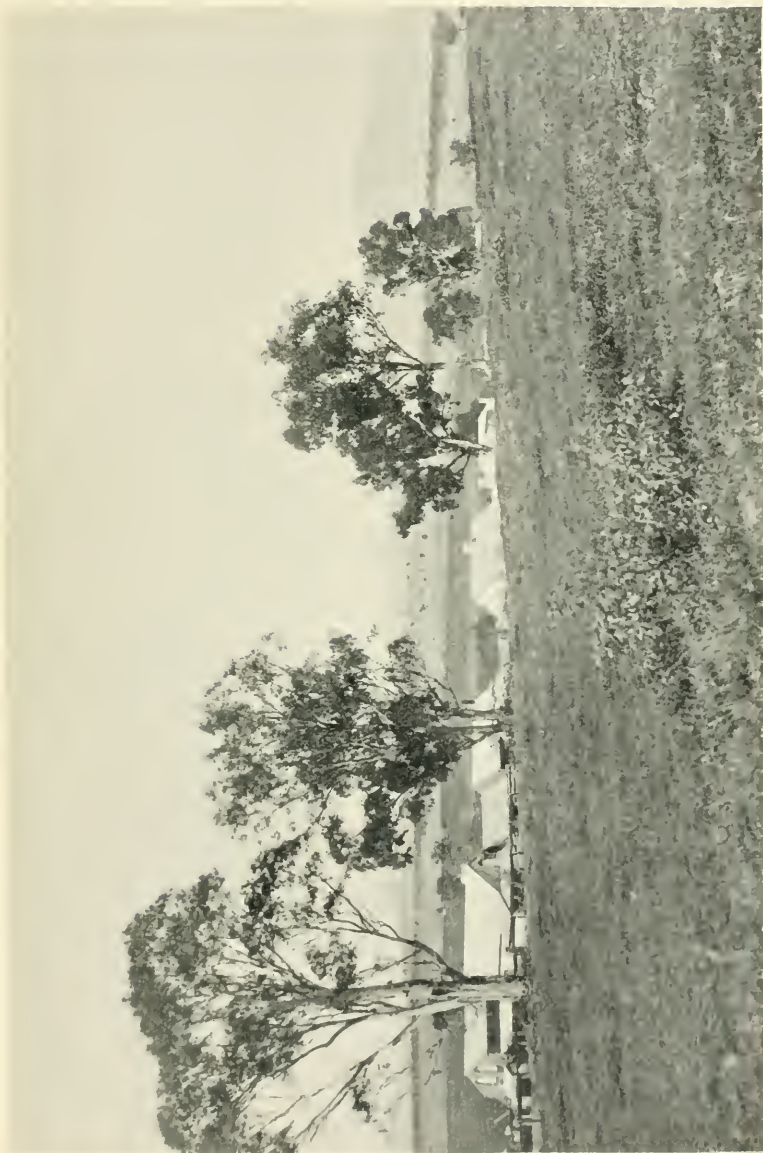
The son of Governor King and father of Mr. King of Goonoo Goonoo entered the navy, saw active service in the French war and surveyed the coasts of Australia in the *Mermaid* and *Bathurst*, and the coasts of America in the *Adventure*. In 1831 he settled in Australia as manager of the Australian Agricultural Company, served as M.L.C. for Gloucester and Macquarie, and died as Rear-Admiral in 1856. Philip Gidley King, of the Peel River Company, his son, began his career in the

Royal Navy till he reached the rank of Lieutenant, when he joined the staff of the Australian Agricultural Company and was appointed manager of the Peel River Company when that Company was formed as an offshoot of the Australian Agricultural Company in 1853. So that there is an unusual amount of managing and governing blood in the King family, which has every chance of being well handed down to succeeding generations, as Mr. King's son and grandsons, as they say in Colonial parlance, are shaping remarkably well.

I will not weary my perhaps already exhausted reader with a close description of the Peel River Estate, of which I was enabled to make a faithful and, I think, interesting report, or describe its snug and picturesque homestead with the usual station buildings, the solid woolshed and neighbouring stud paddocks and drafting yards, the not always to be found school-house and church, and the well-watered creek which winds round the garden at the bottom of the homestead ridge, and the *tout ensemble* of a vast stretch of undulating country either quite cleared of timber or in part waiting to be denuded of its stumps; then from that, ridge upon ridge of grassy, good wool-growing country, rising to the sky line of the picturesque and fairly distant Liverpool Range. The reflection arises of the increasing value a freehold property such as the Peel derives under the continuous development it receives, the conditions of its tenure rendering it unnecessary that that should be in any way hurried.

I said good-bye with infinite regret to the happy,





THE PEEL RIVER ESTATE—WOOLSHED AND BUILDINGS.





hospitable people of Goonoo Goonoo, having previously had a good feed of grapes and figs. I felt how comparatively free from Government interference and varied stock and other pests the management of the estate was, an exemption which was brought into strong contrast when I came to visit other properties.

In a few words I feel inclined to place before my readers the benefit of my experience in finally summing up the most important points to consider in the choice of an Australian pastoral investment, should legitimate squatting be the object in view, and not a speculative purchase with a view to resell.

I. It is absolutely necessary that you should choose your property where there is the certainty of a good yearly rainfall, otherwise the chance of droughts is one too great to encounter, that risk being often bound to bring you down.

II. Select your sheep run where it is freehold if possible.

III. Get good wool-growing country, even if you should require to give your sheep plenty of salt.

IV. Make your choice where carriage is handy and, if possible, cheap, and markets at a fair distance.

Of course you will have to pay high for these desiderata ; still it is better to do so and own a small, compact and well-paying property than attempt to work a larger leasehold squattage against dry seasons and other drawbacks.

Recent dry seasons, unusual in the records of the country, have slackened the ardour of those who conquered the wilderness in earlier days, for there

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